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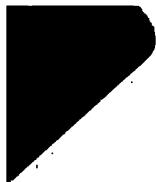
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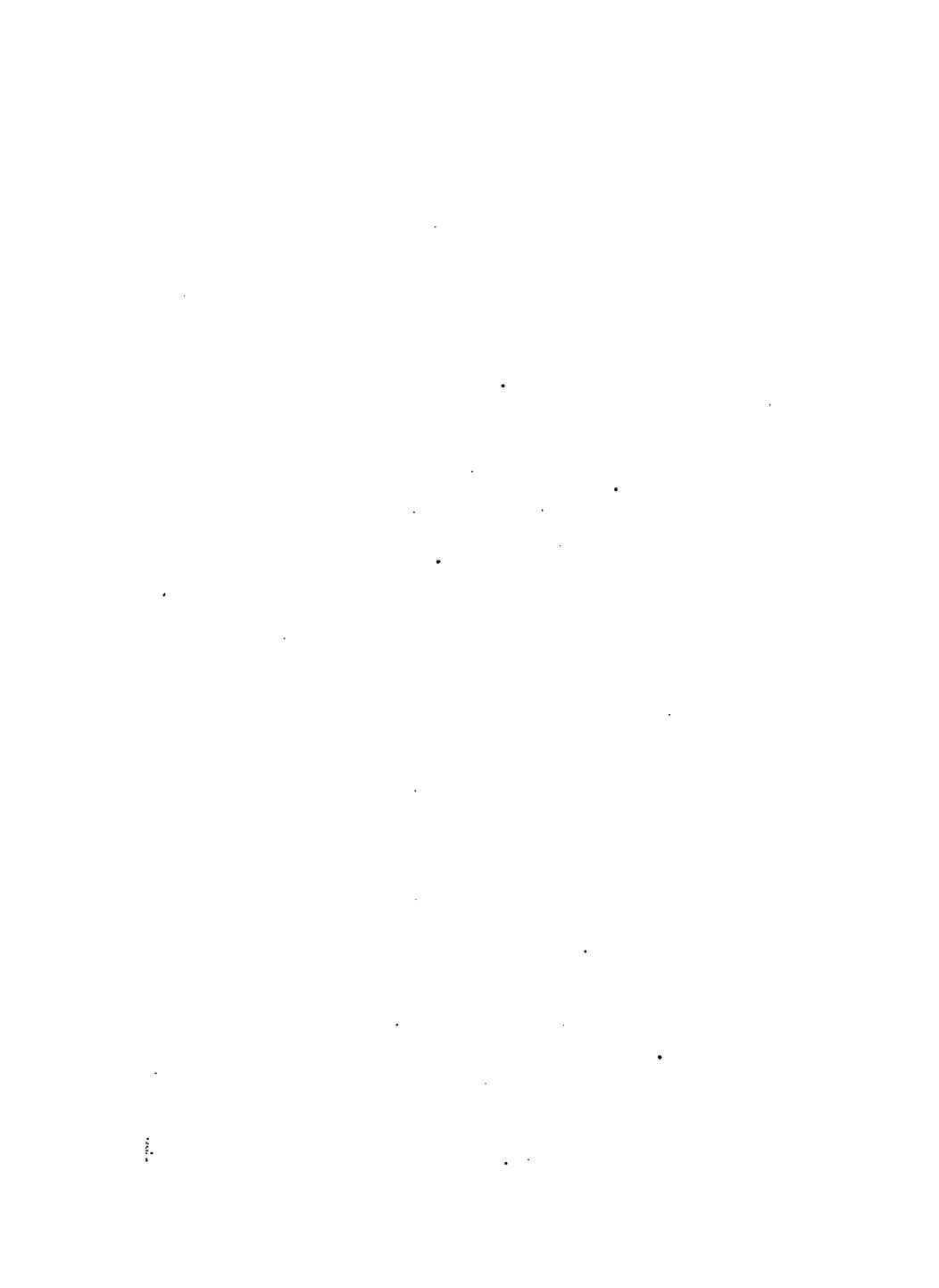
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IN THE BUNDLE OF TIME.



• IN THE BUNDLE OF TIME.

BY

ARLO BATES.

Wrapt up in the bundle of time.

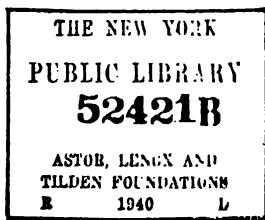
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BOSTON:
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1893.





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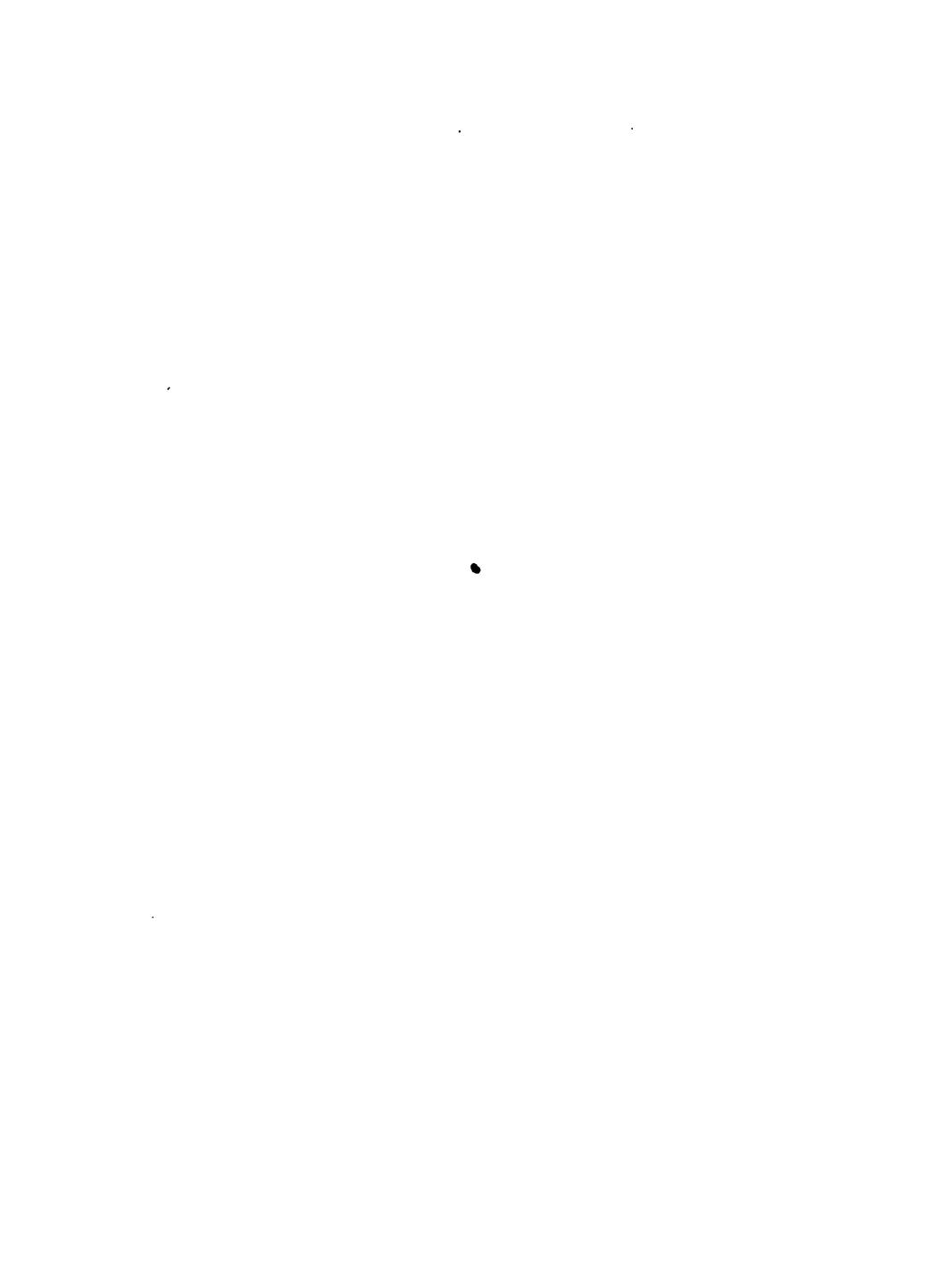
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Wendell.

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Tale the First.



THE WITCH OF HARPSWELL.

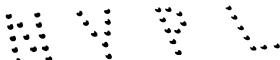
IN THE BUNDLE OF TIME.

THE WITCH OF HARPSWELL.

I.

HE feathery branches of the hemlocks which stood, tall and sombre, beside the path along Harpswell Neck soughed softly in the November wind; and the funeral train that wended its slow way, with frequent haltings, through the woodland track might hear also the monotonous sound of the surf on the rocks out of sight, yet not far away.

It was a singular procession. Six brawny fishwives carried the rude bier, upon which rested a coffin unpainted and clumsy, while behind came a tall, pale girl, supporting the steps of a man who seemed too feeble for the task of walking at all. After these two mourners, to whose faces the effort of repressing emotion had lent an expression of cold sternness, came a handful of women,



who straggled irregularly forward, avoiding the rough places in the forest path with a half-instinctive sense which comes from long familiarity.

Now and then the bearers were in silence relieved of their solemn burden, and with stolid impassiveness the train moved on. The quaint dresses of the women, the cold light filtered through the tossing boughs of pine and hemlock, the mournful bier, combined to produce a sad and strange effect. Even the stolid fishwives who were thus accompanying Elkniah Stover's second wife to her last resting-place were not wholly unconscious of the wildness of the circumstances, and although they had few words in which to express their feelings, they now and then muttered, half to themselves and half to one another, some comment which indicated the astonishment little short of stupefaction of people used to the most commonplace round of life who find themselves suddenly taking part in remarkable and startling occurrences.

The last century was not far past its noon. Harpswell Neck, now a long cape almost bare of trees stretching out into Casco Bay in unattractive barrenness, was then still thickly wooded; and only a path through

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the primeval forest connected the fishing-settlement at its end with the small village gathered about the graveyard and the old square church where Parson Eaton—or, as the country people universally called him, Priest Eaton—broke the bread of life to his seafaring flock.

There had been grave doubts how Priest Eaton might feel about performing the last rites over the body which the women, angrily deserted by the men of the settlement, were wearily bearing to her grave. Hannah Stover not only had been a Quaker, causing great scandal by refusing to be present at the services in the old square church, but there were afloat rumors of a wilder and darker character concerning her. To the step-daughter, Mercy, who had been on the day previous to ask him, Priest Eaton had, however, given his promise, perhaps somewhat reluctantly, to overlook all shortcomings in view of the well-established godliness of Elkniah Stover's family; and the sorrowing husband hoped that no allusion to the religious wanderings of his dead wife might add to his pain.

While the women by their presence and by taking the office of bearers gave testimony to the worth of the departed, they were not

without more or less conscious willingness that the occasion should be improved to their spiritual edification by some contrasting of their own steadfastness in the faith with the errors of the deceased. They had labored zealously with her living, and their characters were too hardy to yield all opposition simply because Goodwife Stover could no longer reply. They had braved the anger of the husbands who had forbidden them to be present at the funeral of one to whom popular malignity gave the name of witch, a name in those days of terrible import; but righteousness, and perhaps especially feminine righteousness, is seldom unwilling to hear itself commended, even at the expense of the unanswering dead.

As the forest began to grow thinner, and there were signs that the village was near, a certain subtle air of expectation made itself evident by faint signs. The bearers walked with a more alert step, the women behind drew their cloaks about them with an air half of protest and half of reproval, while Elkniah Stover's daughter held more firmly in her own the trembling arm of her aged father, as she vainly tried to repress the growing agitation that made her own limbs unsteady and her throat dry and parched.

At length, between the trees appeared the heavy eaves of the meeting-house; and in a moment more the rough palings of the enclosure in which it stood with its graves about it, were brought in sight by the abrupt emergence of the path from a thicket of alders and arbor-vitæ.

Beside the churchyard gate the women saw Priest Eaton, his sombre robes of office blown by the chill November wind; and with a sudden surprise which made their hearts stand still, they saw, too, that he was not alone, but that around him in sullen groups were gathered the men of the Neck, whom their wives believed still at home in the settlement from which they had come.

For an instant the forlorn band of corpse-bearers half halted and wavered as if to turn back; then, obeying the instinct that makes women in a supreme crisis so inevitably turn to the priest, they carried the bier quickly forward and set it before the black-robed figure of Parson Eaton.

II.

THERE was a moment of complete silence. Then Goodwife Mayo, with a deep-drawn sigh of fatigue, wiped her heated forehead

upon the corner of her long, coarse cloak. The homely action broke the spell with which the strangeness of the situation had held them, and as if at a concerted signal, the men pressed forward. As they did so, a tall, gaunt man, with weather-beaten face and narrow eyes, spoke.

“Ye may take the witch-wife back,” he said, with a roughness that was partly genuine and partly assumed to help him overcome some secret, lingering weakness. “Let her lie in some of the black places in the woods where she would foregather with her master the Devil; but her wicked body shall never poison the ground where Christian folk are buried. No grave in consecrated ground for the likes of her.”

A hoarse murmur of assent, like the distant roaring of the surf on the ledges of white Seguin, answered him from the men. The women, half from habitual fear of their husbands and half from superstitious dread of the possibility of contamination from the dead, began to huddle together, drawing little by little away from the bier. Their eyes appealed to Priest Eaton to speak for them and to direct their course in an extremity so far removed from their ordinary experiences.

The dead leaves, hurrying before the wind, rustled at their feet, while in the air as a vague monotone was the distant sound of the soughing boughs and the waves beating upon the inhospitable rocks.

“Ezra Johnston,” the clergyman said in tones of solemnity, “who gave you the right to dictate who shall rest in consecrated ground? Are you the leader of God’s people?”

“No,” the other retorted, the angry blood flushing his swarthy cheek; “but when the leader of God’s people would let the Devil’s dam into the graveyard of our meetin’-house, it is a time when any man may speak. This woman could never be made to go through that gate while she was alive; why should she be carried through it, now she is dead?”

The murmur of approval swelled again, louder than before; and little by little the groups shifted, until Mercy Stover and her white-haired father were left alone beside the rough coffin.

“You were always hasty of speech,” Priest Eaton answered calmly, but with a certain stern dignity that belonged to his office in those days. “Who are you, to say who is worthy? Who made you a witch-finder?”

“I did not need to be a witch-finder to

know Goodwife Stover for a witch," was the stout reply. "I knew of her ways and her repute while still she lived in Freeport, and I warned Brother Elkniah against her. For that very thing she was hotly angered against me, by this token that my seine broke that same day I spoke as if every mesh in it were cut, and sorely hath she many times since tormented me with her witch-wiles. Ask Goodman Haskell, here, if he was not on my boat when she bewitched my killock so that all my strength was naught to move it until I made the sign of a cross on it. Ask —"

"I have heard," interrupted the minister, "of your popish practices before; but they are not to be boasted of in open day unrebuked."

Elkniah Stover's limbs had failed under him, as this strange colloquy went on, and he had sunk, a pathetic and broken figure, upon the handle of the bier. As he sat with one palsied hand, blue with the cold, resting upon the head of his staff, and the other clasping tightly the wrist of Mercy, he lifted his white head with a gesture of despair and anguish.

"Was it for this," he wailed in a quavering voice of pain, "that the Lord gave me strength to rise from my bed, and to follow the body of my helpmeet to the grave when

a grave is denied her? Ezra Johnston was greatly angered, as ye all know, that after his sister that was my wife died, I should go to Freeport for a helpmeet, when he would have had me choose the sister of his own goodwife. His killock caught under the thwarts. Waitstill Eastman can tell you that. But all that went amiss Ezra would still lay at the door of my goodwife; her that is here dead before ye, and ye deny her a grave away from the wolves."

"She shall have her grave, father," Mercy said, with an intensity of purpose that impressed even her angry uncle. "She shall lie by the side of my own mother if I have to bury her with no one to help me."

The fickle sympathy of the bystanders veered in her direction, and one or two of the fishwives who had formed part of the funeral train moved almost imperceptibly toward the spot where she stood, their action showing that the more merciful, at least, could not easily bring themselves to anything so horrible to their mind as to deny burial to a fellow-creature. Before, however, the movement could be at all general, even before it was marked, Ezra Johnston, whose always violent temper was fast mastering him, broke out again:

"Oh, no doubt Waitstill Eastman knows, and I am a blind fool that cannot see when his killock is free of the thwarts! Perhaps Goodman Eastman will say, too, that last Sabbath night I was n't haled in my sleep to the British bark off the point, and dragged by the Devil's imps up and down the sides till I was bruised and aching in every bone of my body. And I might have been killed but that daylight drew on, and with my own ears I heard Goodwife Stover say: 'Let him go; 't is almost cock-crowing.' I knew her voice as well as I know my own, and that but two days before she died. What do ye say to that, Elkniah Stover? What do ye say to that, Parson Eaton?"

A dozen voices broke loose into a sudden babble. The unseemly and cruel debate which had thus far been carried on by single speakers was all at once taken up by the whole company. The first surprise and awe had now worn off enough to let the folk recover the use of their tongues, and men and women hurried clamorously to deny or to confirm Ezra Johnston's charges. The clergyman tried vainly to make himself heard. His words were lost in the growing tumult. The crowd became every moment more and more like a mob. Johnston grew more and

more furious, and his anger infected the men that were most under his influence. The very name of witch roused all the superstitious fears of the simple fishermen, and all the fanaticism of their blood was appealed to.

“Come,” Johnston cried out at last, struck with a sudden idea, “let us take the witch-wife to the Devil’s Den, and leave her bones to rot there. I warrant she has been there times enough before.”

A shudder ran through his hearers. The Devil’s Den was a rocky cave on the shore of Harpswell Neck, where more than one good boat had perished, and where more than one fisherman had seen strange lights flitting about to cheat him to his destruction.

“Come,” repeated Johnston, taking a long stride toward the bier, “take hold here, some of you.”

But before he could grasp the rude handle, his niece sprang forward. Her eyes flashed; her simple hood fell back from her pale face, and her whole form quivered with excitement.

“Coward!” she cried. “Oh, you coward, you coward!”

Her voice, shrill and high, rang upward toward the heavy gray clouds as if it would call help down from heaven. The women

shrank back in fear, and the men in astonishment, while with arms stretched out in an unstudied attitude of appeal, and with an energy the more impressive by contrast with her usually calm and almost shy manner, Mercy poured out her protest.

"What has my mother done," she demanded with a sort of sacred fury that stilled for the moment all murmurs, and brought to the eyes of more than one tears, half of pity and half of excitement, "what has my mother done, that you would treat her dead body worse than that of a dog? She has been more than a mother to me, and how many times she has helped the sick and the poor! Oh, are you the neighbors I have lived among all my life, and that have been kind to me, that I must beg for a grave for my mother, who was kinder and better than you all? And you, Uncle Ezra! Who saved your hand when it was frozen? Who doctored little Hope when she had the scarlet fever? You were glad enough to have her help when she was living, but now — "

Her self-control gave way. She broke off in a burst of hysterical sobs, leaning her face upon the shoulder of her trembling old father. Ezra Johnston, for a moment giving

way before his niece's vehemence, covered his confusion with a sneer, and again attempted to seize the handle of the bier.

Before he could do more, however, a vigorous grasp caught his arm, and a stalwart young fellow drew him roughly back.

"Let be, Ezra Johnston," the young man said in a deep voice, his strong white teeth showing angrily. "Let be, or it will be worse for ye."

Like a wild-cat, Johnston turned to strike; but before the blow could fall, the clergyman sprang to catch the strong wrist of his angry parishioner.

"Stop!" Priest Eaton commanded in a voice of authority. "I warn you that you are going too far."

Enraged as Johnston was, he was still sufficiently master of himself to realize that it was not safe openly to defy the clergyman; and it is not improbable, too, that he could not himself wholly shake off the habit of obedience that was almost universal in the scattered parish.

With any ally less powerful than superstition, it would have been idle for him to set himself against the minister on any question; but the remote pulses of the wave of mad-

ness which shook Salem in 1648 were more than a century in dying away, and in Harpswell the belief in witchcraft was as perfect as the faith in religion. Even to-day the superstition lives in many a remote New England village; and the air of the sea, laden as it is with mysterious sounds and influences, seems especially to nourish these delusions.

Johnston's whole stubborn nature was by this time aroused, and all his cunning bent on the carrying of his point. He felt instinctively that the tide of general feeling was turning against him, and with genuine New England shrewdness he hit upon precisely the appeal that would most surely win the fickle crowd again to his views.

“Well,” he sneered, falling back, “if Jacob Thatcher takes the matter up, of course we must all give way, even if he wants an accursed witch-wife buried in the same lot with all the Christian folk we come of. Everybody knows that Goody Stover bewitched him long ago to make him run after Mercy; and ye, Daniel Strong, have cause to remember the luck she gave him. But if he takes sides with the Devil, the two together may well be too much for the honest men of Harpswell.”

The appeal produced an instant and powerful effect, and the angry retort of Jacob Thatcher was drowned in the cries of assent and approval that answered Johnston's words.

That Thatcher was the lover of Mercy Stover was well enough known in a community where a man was hardly able to keep even his thoughts to himself, and the reference to this fact impeached at once the sincerity and impartiality of his interference. By alluding, moreover, to an old rivalry that extended to boats, athletics, and all interests which the narrow life of Harpswell permitted, and in which Thatcher was always victor, Johnston had secured for himself a powerful support. Not only Daniel Strong, but many of the young men, smarted under a secret sense of defeat, while the coincidence between the universal success of the winner and his fondness for the witch's daughter was exactly the sort of argument which appealed most strongly to the superstitious fisherfolk.

The crowd once more broke into speech which was rather a babble than a clamor, and which became more angry as it swelled. The words of Priest Eaton were lost in the noise. Jacob Thatcher placed himself between the bier and his townsfolk, but even

his stout shoulders seemed a slight enough barrier against sacrilege to the dead.

It was one of those chaotic and critical moments in the progress of a mob when it is broken into innumerable separate groups in angry dispute, and when it is idle to attempt to reach it as a whole until some striking incident unites once more its divided attention. It is usually true, moreover, that upon the first general impression which shall be exerted on a mob at such a crisis depends its action. It is at its most impressionable stage, and will readily take the stamp of whatever idea is strongly presented to it.

By this time the crowd collected at the churchyard gate included almost every human being in the village, and it had assumed the character of a genuine mob. The remonstrances of Priest Eaton, the entreaties of Elkniah Stover, the appeal of Mercy, and the interference of Jacob Thatcher had all proved of no avail, and there seemed small hope but Ezra Johnston would carry his point, and the body of the dead Quakeress be cast in dis-honor upon the jagged rocks of the Devil's Den.

Help at this desperate crisis came from an unthought-of source. By one of those strange thrills that seem to reach the mind

through some sense beyond the five, and to appeal to some faculty more subtle, the excited villagers became aware that something new had happened. A sudden hush spread over the wild company. Excited fishwives paused with open mouths in the midst of their haranguing, and stretched their necks toward the bier; the angry men broke off their noisy wrangling to turn their eyes in the same direction; even Mercy, who had clung convulsively to her father in the terror of seeing familiar faces transformed into strangeness before her eyes by superstition and rage, turned to look toward the coffin.

It was only old Goody Cole, who had at this critical moment made her tottering way up to the bier and flung herself down upon it. Lame and decrepit, weak and wandering in her wits, the poor old creature, whose stream of life had been so thin that for almost a century it had trickled on without draining even the ordinary measure of human existence, had only now been able to complete the journey from Harpswell Neck. All the long woodland track she had come, half tottering, half crawling, to lay her blessing upon Goodwife Stover's grave.

In a wail that had in it the pathos of the sound of the wind in the forest, the wretched

crone cried over and over, with heart-broken reiteration:

“Oh, but she was my life! Oh, but she was my life! Oh, but she was my life!”

The cry was so intense that it thrilled even the stolid fishermen of Harpswell Neck, perhaps for the time being rendered more sensitive than usual by unwonted excitement. The tension of their nerves became every moment greater, as they stood in unstudied groups, picturesque and strange. The brief November afternoon was darkening to its close, long lines of fiery light breaking the cold gray of the western sky. A few scant snow-flakes were silently stealing through the air, falling upon the angry villagers, upon the tall form of Priest Eaton, with white locks and black gown, upon the strong young figure of Jacob Thatcher, standing sentinel between his townsfolk and the dead, upon the pathetic group of father and daughter, and amid them all, that withered, century-old figure of Goody Cole, repeating in shrill monotone:

“Oh, but she was my life!”

They all understood that cry. There was no one there but knew well how long Goody

Cole had been a pensioner on the bounty of Goodwife Stover. They might all remember, too, if they chose, that Goody Cole, whom they had left to the tender mercies of a woman they called a witch, was the widow of a man who had lost his life carrying help to a vessel on which were the fathers and husbands of people still alive and in this angry crowd. Goody Cole had been too proud to go on the parish, and her neighbors half a century ago had sworn that she should never come to want. Now, only the charity of this Quaker woman from Freeport had kept her from actual starvation.

“Oh, but she was my life!” quavered the trembling, aged voice over and over. “Oh, but she was my life!”

Pricked to the heart, two other women, almost young enough to be Goody Cole’s granddaughters, came out from the crowd and kneeled beside her, bowing their heads with sobs upon the coffin. There was a rustle and stir among the bystanders. They knew well enough what cause for gratitude these two had. Everybody knew all that happened on Harpswell Neck, and remembered now how to one of these women Goodwife Stover had come in the agonizing horror

of childbirth, a saving angel; and how beside the bed of the second she had watched when a malignant disease kept every other woman on the Neck away.

“Oh, but she was my life!” shrilled Goody Cole, her voice rising in a thrilling strain which made the excited women shiver as if with cold.

The crowd of fishwives wavered. Then Goodwife Mayo, whose stout muscles had out-tired those of all the other bearers on the long march from Elkniah Stover’s cottage to the shadow of the square meeting-house in which they stood, strode forward again to the coffin. She set her arms akimbo and looked about her.

“And ye, Betty Hincks,” she demanded, “who gave ye that cloak ye’re wearing this very hour? And ye, Martha Hastings, who brought ye through the fever last fall? And ye, Andrew Cates, who nursed your wife in haying-time? If Hannah Stover was a witch, well would it be for Harpswell Neck if we had more of them.”

“Oh, but she was my life!” came in the piercing cry of Goody Cole, like a refrain rising still higher and higher. “Oh, but she was my life!”

"Take up the bier," Priest Eaton cried, with a gesture at once of dignity and of command. "Bury her wherever these men will. The ground will be consecrated wherever her body lies. Take it to the Devil's Den," he went on, the occasion inspiring him with unwonted fire, "and I tell you the Devil's Den will be holy if Goodwife Stover's corpse comes there!"

A wave of sudden feeling swept over the people like a mighty wind. As if obeying a common impulse, they rushed forward, with sobs and broken ejaculations, to raise the bier.

But Goodwife Mayo waved them back.

"No," she said; "no man shall touch this bier. The women that have brought it so far in spite of their husbands' orders can carry it the rest of the way!"

There was a murmur of mingled assent, contrition, and remonstrance; but it was in the end as Goodwife Mayo said.

Followed by all the men, even to Ezra Johnston, who scowled but yielded to the tide of feeling he could not turn back, the women of Harpswell Neck bore the body of Hannah Stover to her resting-place in the consecrated ground of the old graveyard.

“Ye have buried a witch,” Johnston muttered under his breath, as they left the sacred spot.

But in solemn rebuke Priest Eaton answered him:

“We have made the grave of a saint.”

Interlude First.



A SUMMER COMEDY.



A SUMMER COMEDY.

[Isle au Haut is less known than it deserves to be, since there is no other island on the New England coast so lovely except Mt. Desert; but that it is the pleasanter for being not yet too much in the fashion none of its admirers will be likely to deny. The Club House at the northeastern corner of the island commands so enchanting a view of sea and land and sky so cunningly commingled, that one who has once looked from its piazzas is never after content to let the summer slip by without visiting the spot again.

In the old days when the steam-ferry was not, and the means of communication with the mainland was by means of sail-boats, two ladies sat one Saturday afternoon in August waiting the arrival of a yacht from Green's Landing. Mrs. Delafield, of New York, and Miss Edith Triscott, of Boston, chanced for the time being to be the only boarders at the Club House, a party having gone on to Mt. Desert in the morning.]

“I WISH I knew who is coming with Mr. Delafield,” Miss Triscott observes, straining her gaze toward the beautiful outline of the Camden Hills, blue and undulating on the horizon. “If I ever have a husband, Aunt Margaret, the first thing I shall teach him is that he is not to send me word

he intends bringing a gentleman with him. He shall say Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones, so that I shall know what is before me."

"When you get a husband," the elder lady replies, smiling, "you will learn to be so thankful if he condescends to send you any word at all when he is bringing company that you 'll forget to be exacting about small details."

"I don't believe it," is the girl's reply. "There 's the boat. Give me the glass and let me see if I can make out how many are in it."

The conversation for the next few moments is of a confused and fragmentary nature, beginning with speculations and denials, but gradually, as Miss Triscott, by moving about the veranda, is able to make out the approaching boat more clearly, coming down to the definite statement that there are four men in the yacht.

"Then Tom has brought only one man," Mrs. Delafield comments. "Captain Baxter had the boy with him."

"Well," observes her niece, resuming her place in the wide rocking-chair, "I hope it is somebody nice, since I 've got to entertain him over Sunday. You will be absorbed in Uncle Tom, and the burden of the unknown will fall on my shoulders."

Her aunt laughs softly, and with unimportant chat they watch the white-sailed yacht slide along over the sapphire water, to drop anchor off the rocks below Point Lookout, upon which the Club

House stands. A small boat puts off for the shore, two gentlemen are set upon land, and while Captain Baxter goes back to his craft to assist the boy in making all tight and fast, the pair of new arrivals come briskly up the path toward the house.

“I’m sure I don’t know who the young man is,” Mrs. Delafield remarks, waving her handkerchief in answer to a signal from her husband. “Why, Edith, what is the matter?”

“Oh, Aunt Margaret, I know who it is!” gasps the other with tragic intensity. “It’s that disagreeable George Coleman. I’d rather die than meet him. Oh, dear! What shall I *do*! I’m going into the house.”

“Stop!” her aunt commands, catching her dress. “It’s no use to run away now. They’ve seen us. Who’s George Coleman?”

“Why, Aunt Margaret, you *know* who George Coleman is. He’s the man—”

“What, not the one that—”

“Yes; the very one. Oh! I wish I’d gone to Mt. Desert with Kittie Lawrence. What—”

She breaks off abruptly because the two gentlemen are by this time on the veranda steps, and consequently within hearing. With that command of the feelings which is at once characteristic of stoical savages and highly civilized ladies, Miss Triscott instantly assumes an unconscious air, and goes forward with her aunt to greet Mr. Delafield.

"My dear," that gentleman says, half a minute later, with the truly virtuous air which is never wanting to a man who has done a conspicuously awkward thing, "let me present Mr. Coleman. Edith, do you know Mr. Coleman? Miss Triscott, George. I had a fight to bring him; so you must help me prove to him that Isle au Haut is the most delightful place in the world."

"It has been," Miss Triscott is pleased to observe with frigid and perhaps discourteous ambiguity.

She moves back to her chair as she speaks, Mrs. Delafield seizes her husband and draws him aside to explain the situation. Mr. Coleman glances from the pair to Miss Triscott, and then, after a second of hesitation, goes over to sit down near the young lady.

"It is a beautiful view," he ventures dispassionately, letting his gaze rest upon the many islands, the dimpling and twinkling sea, the distant hills, and the rocky shore below them.

"Very," she replies briefly.

"Mr. Delafield is an enthusiast about Isle au Haut," he continues imperturbably, "but if it is all as pretty as this I don't blame him."

The young lady makes no reply, and wonders why her aunt does not join them; happily unconscious of the fact that her uncle, hearing the state of affairs, has with characteristic decision dragged his wife away until the young people shall have established pleasant relations.

"I've only two days here, anyway, Margaret," he declares, leading his unwilling spouse a captive to her room, "and I won't have the time spoiled by whimsies. Leave them alone half an hour and they'll at least agree to an armistice for over Sunday. I won't have any manoeuvring. I've seen that tried before."

There is silence on the veranda for a few minutes. Miss Triscott studies her rings with close attention, while the young man seems absorbed in the view.

"I don't know as it's necessary for me to explain," he says stiffly, when it seems impossible to support the unnatural stillness any longer, "that I should not have consented to come to Isle au Haut if I had had any idea you were here."

"Hardly," she returns with needless vehemence. "I am sufficiently convinced that you would have avoided me if you could."

He. "That is not what I meant, of course; but it is like you to distort things. It didn't occur to me that Mr. Delafield's niece was yourself."

She. "And I didn't know you knew Mr. Delafield."

He. "I have the honor to be making plans for his New York house, and he insisted that I should come here and talk with Mrs. Delafield."

She. "I am sorry to be detaining you from fulfilling your errand."

He. "Oh, it is no matter, since circumstances

seem to give me opportunity for a word or two I've long wanted to say to yourself."

She moves uneasily in her chair, and is evidently divided between a mind to run away and a determination not to retreat. He smiles somewhat cynically.

He. "The letter which I wrote you explaining certain things was returned to me unopened, and while it is perhaps not worth while, I cannot deny myself the pleasure — not to speak of the justice — of telling you what was in it."

She. "You are certainly right in saying that it is not worth while."

He. "Still time here cannot be so valuable but that we can afford to do things that are not worth while. How wonderfully still it is!"

She (with deliberate rudeness). "Yes, it is that which I have particularly enjoyed. We have been so undisturbed."

He. "Would it be impertinent to ask you if you mind telling me just why you broke off our engagement and sent back my letters and the ring without a word?"

She. "It would be extremely impertinent."

He. "Nevertheless I venture to do it."

She (with much the air of a society Nemesis — if such a being exists — who at length overwhelms a guilty victim). "You know why I sent them back."

He. "You will at least allow that you have never given me any reason."

She. "I was too considerate to wish to occupy with useless explanations time which might otherwise be devoted to the society of the enchanting Mrs. Woodwell."

He. "Then I am to infer that your hasty and cruel — for I was in love with you then — action was in some way connected with Mrs. Woodwell."

She (*blazing out with sudden indignation*). "I must say, Mr. Coleman, I like your cool way of sitting there and assuming that this is a mere trifle and that I am in the wrong. Perhaps you have forgotten that we were to lead Mrs. Cabot's german together, and that after waiting an hour for the carriage with my gloves on I got a note from you."

He. "I was unaware of the circumstance that you had your gloves on. That of course adds an enormity to my offence I had n't dreamed of."

She. "Oh, you may sneer, but that helps nothing. What did your note say? 'I am going to New York on the midnight train with Mrs. Woodwell.' Simply that, and not even an excuse."

He. "Pardon me, Miss Triscott, your account is incorrect in some important particulars. In the first place the note said, 'Must go to New York ;' in the second it began 'My darling' and ended 'Your very own.' "

She. "What has that to do with it?"

He. "Nothing ; except to show that I was still fond of you."

She. "And the mortification of it ! That detest-

able Elsie Dimmont and that Dr. Wilson of hers had to be teased to lead at the last minute ; and everybody wanted to know where you were, and why you did n't send Mrs. Cabot word sooner. It was *perfectly* detestable ! ”

He (dryly). “ It must have been.”

She (coldly). “ Since I cannot get away from you at Isle au Haut, Mr. Coleman, you might at least have the kindness to spare me your sarcasms.”

- *He.* “ I will spare you everything except my explanation, and that shall be brief. Mrs. Woodwell — or Mrs. Giles, as she is now — ”

She. “ Why, is she married, then ? ”

He. “ Certainly. It was then that she was married. That 's what she went to New York for.”

She. “ She might have taken the man she meant to marry with her.”

He (imperturbably). “ She could n't. He was there already. Harry Giles is a very old friend of mine, and he 'd been engaged to Helen Woodwell for almost a year. The thing was kept quiet because her first husband's people made such a fuss about her marrying again. They did n't want her money to go out of their tribe. I was almost the only person in Boston who knew it.”

She. “ When we were engaged you said you told me all your secrets.”

He. “ Yes, but I never pretended to tell you the secrets of my friends.”

She. “ It would have saved some trouble if you had.”

He (easily). "Oh, I 've learned to think that things after all arrange themselves very well in this world. If one does the square thing, he generally comes out right in the end."

Miss Triscott, who is momently becoming more and more agitated, rises and goes to the edge of the veranda. She seats herself upon the railing, beginning to break bits off the boughs of a fir-tree within reach.

She. "I *wish* Aunt Margaret would come back."

He. "I don't want her to come until I 'm done. Harry got orders to start on twelve hours' notice for China, and he would n't go without marrying Helen. He telegraphed me to bring her on, and, as he was perfectly wild over the matter, I knew you 'd want me to go, and I sent you the only word I had time to send. I wrote an explanation on the train, but you did not do me the honor to read it. I was obstinate enough to promise myself that sometime you should hear it verbally. The chance came sooner than I had ventured to hope. Now I will not trouble you further."

He rises with an air of conscious and vindicated virtue which strikes Miss Triscott as decidedly annoying, even while she acknowledges that the young architect has some right to lord it for the moment. She rises bravely, however, and comes forward holding out her hand.

"I see it is my duty to beg your pardon," she says coldly. "You furnish so striking an example

of the satisfaction which comes from doing one's duty that I am unwilling to miss the opportunity."

He (a little abashed). "I beg you will not put it in that way. Of course duty is duty."

She. "And it often has the added advantage of being the most odious thing to one's neighbors that can be devised. As we have to pass Sunday under the same roof, and as there happen to be only four of us here, it seems to me it will be better to postpone all further performance of duty until some time when we can escape from each other."

He (forgetting to relinquish her hand which he has taken when she offered her apology). "With all my heart. I was perfectly miserable when you sent back my ring."

She (withdrawing her hand and going back to her rocking-chair). "Oh, very likely. You were, you say, in love with me then. How amusing a passion that is over is to look back upon!"

He. "You seem to speak from experience."

She. "Oh, not necessarily. I really don't seem to remember having been very deeply in love."

He (beginning to lose his head a little, although not yet conscious of it). "You have certainly declared —"

She. "Who has n't? When a man is tremendously in love with her, a woman will say anything to please him."

He. "You give your sex a good character."

She laughs by way of answer, fully aware that she is getting him to lose his temper, and secretly sure that if she can make him angry she may gain her point in the end.

She. "With men to deal with we have to use our wits, of course. You can't blame us for that."

He. "Then that explains why you were so ready to send back my ring. You never cared for me at all."

She. "Since you got over it so quickly, it is so much better all around, is n't it? It is so pleasant to feel that nobody is hurt."

He (savagely, having forgotten entirely his simulation of indifference). "Who said I 'd got over it?"

She. "Why, did n't you?"

He (with an inward objurgation devoted to her feigned innocence). "No, I did n't."

She. "Oh, I beg your pardon, I 'm sure ; but your studied reference to all that sort of thing as in the past —"

He. "What sort of thing?"

She. "Why, being fond of me, and — and — all that, you know."

She casts down her eyes, and after a moment begins, quite without any apparent cause, to blush violently. Mr. Coleman, who has risen and begun to pace up and down with his hands behind him, stops in front of her chair with the determined aspect of a man who will stand no more nonsense.

"Look here, Edith," he says, with a good deal of emphasis, "you know I have n't got over it."

She. "How should I?"

He. "Being fond of you and all that, as you call it, is n't the sort of thing that a man does get over."

A soft flush comes into Miss Triscott's cheek. She clasps her pretty hands and looks out over the sparkling sea with a smile of new happiness.

"You don't know," she observes with feminine irrelevancy, "how fond we have become of little Flake Island over there. Is n't it pretty from here?"

He. "Very pretty; but I'm not interested in islands just now, I'm interested in you."

She. "That's very kind of you, especially when I am as cruel as you say."

He. "Oh, I don't take any credit for it. I can't help it."

She. "Then you've tried."

He. "Yes, I have. I had to, did n't I? Come, Edith, you need n't pretend not to care for me, and if you do, I won't believe you."

She. "I like your impudence."

He. "Then it's all right, for I promise to be nothing but impudence, so you'll have nothing to dislike."

She. "That will require very little change."

The answer seems not wholly to displease him, for he smiles warmly as he takes a chair close by

hers. Then he possesses himself of her hand, and after a second of hesitation he puts his arm about her and kisses her full upon the lips.

She (with an indignation so absurdly overdone that she has to join in his laugh at it). "Why, George, right outdoors here! Suppose somebody should see us."

He. "Oh, it is so still here that nobody could see us."

Being a woman, she does not immediately perceive the fallacy of this logic, and submits with no very great show of unwillingness to a repetition of the demonstration. Five minutes later Mr. Delafield appears with his wife in the doorway behind the young people, and examines the pair with a shrewd glance of satisfaction.

"It's all right," he remarks in a self-satisfied aside. "We shall have a quiet Sunday all to ourselves, Margaret. They won't trouble us."



Tale the Second.



A POLITICAL DINNER.



A POLITICAL DINNER.



HERE is, upon the third floor of the Union Club House, on Park Street, Boston, a card-room overlooking the Common which is often used as a waiting or reception room for private dinner-parties. About five o'clock one October afternoon, a gentleman stood by one of its windows, looking out over the tops of the already almost naked trees, the heaps of yellow leaves and patches of dying grass, and thus on to the sky beyond the Public Garden, saffron and crimson with the after-glow of an autumnal sunset.

The man was young, tall, and well knit, with elastic, graceful figure and a proud carriage of the head; a certain alertness and restlessness of bearing indicating a highly nervous temperament. His hand, which rested upon the sash of the window, was long and slender, with carefully kept nails, while his evening dress was worn with the ease and air of one whose occupations leave him

leisure sufficient for the cultivation of some fastidiousness in his personal habits.

The door of the room, although not latched, was nearly closed, and whenever a step sounded in the hall outside, the solitary occupant of the apartment involuntarily assumed an attitude of attention which gave place to a look of relief when the step passed by. At length the sound of a long, deliberate tread reached his ear, and his slender fingers stopped their nervous play upon the window-sash, a look of disgust came over his mobile face, and without turning he said, as the door swung open to admit the newcomer:

“ You are almost late, Richard.”

To one accustomed to vary the monotony of life by moralizing, it might have occurred to remark the use of the full name; and it indeed throws a certain light upon the character of Richard Gould to note that not even his most intimate friends ever thought of calling him by any of those familiar nicknames in which, after all, lies the essence of good fellowship.

Gould was below medium stature, pale in the coloring of skin, hair, and eyes, and he wore always an air of being well brushed, which was so perfect as to be somewhat annoying.

It irritated his cousin, Tom Baxter, the tall young man who stood at the window, so intensely that even now, with his back to Gould, he was conscious of an exasperated inclination to seize the other, ruffle his smooth hair, crumple his immaculate shirt-front, and crease his unwrinkled coat. It seemed to him as if an intolerable interval elapsed before Richard, in his deliberate fashion, responded to his greeting.

"We may be interrupted in a moment," Gould said, coming at once to business, "and I wish to be sure you understand what—"

"I understand perfectly," the other responded impatiently, turning away from the window to face his interlocutor, "I am to pay another instalment of your infernal black-mail, and your note was sufficiently explicit to let me know what is expected of me. You need not take the trouble to go over it again. I won't listen."

The other smiled, putting up his hand with a gesture of deprecation, glancing at the same time towards the door to assure himself that he had closed it on entering.

"My dear fellow," he said, "there is really no occasion for a row. You know you mean to oblige me, and why make a fuss about it?"

Tom muttered a curse of impatience and turned back to gaze out of the window once more, while the other, despite his prohibition, detailed the scheme that night to be consummated for his political aggrandizement. Far below, in Park Street, a florist's boy was carrying home an order of roses, a bunch so big that their crimson splendors burst out of the paper and made a vivid spot of color in the old street, even in the fast-growing dusk. Tom never saw roses—or indeed anything else lovely—without thinking of Ethel Stanley; and he almost groaned aloud as the remembrance of her face came into his mind now. For five years he had been betrothed to Miss Stanley, and for a scarcely shorter time had he been in the power of his cousin who stood here to-day with the determination to enforce that power to the utmost. He wheeled again swiftly and faced his persecutor.

“Of course they count on a handsome subscription from you,” Mr. Gould was saying, “though when you nominate me you are not to put that out too crudely—just hint at it.”

“Look here,” Tom broke out, “why can't you come out squarely like a man, Richard, and say how much money you will take for

that piece of paper? It would be quite as well for you, and you are fast driving me to desperation."

The other smiled cruelly, taking from his pocket-book a worn yellow envelope, out of which he drew an old letter and a crumpled check.

"Very innocent-looking bits of paper," he observed, smoothing the check between his fingers, "I think I won't sell just yet, Tom. There's more in you than money,—your friendship counts for something, my boy; especially just now, when your fondness for me is all that prevents your being an out and out Independent, and making a fool of yourself. I'm really doing you a service in keeping you in the party. You'd only be sacrificing yourself to go tagging after George Hammond."

"George Hammond is the only man that can carry the district," Baxter retorted aggressively. "Even—"

"Excuse me," interrupted the other with perfect suavity, "Hammond with your influence might carry the district, but he can't without it; and as I am so fortunate as to have secured that—"

A click at the door prevented the conclusion of his remark, and a small active gentle-

man, with red hair and shining eyeglasses, entered. Mr. Gould replaced letter and check in their envelope, stuffing this into his pocket; and the cousins greeted the newcomer by a name familiar in political circles. Half-a-dozen other gentlemen followed in quick succession, and the talk became general. Poor Tom seated himself in a chair near the window, and as the glare of gas replaced the fast-fading daylight, he sat staring gloomily at the row of figures—clubs, hearts, spades, and diamonds—with which the walls were decorated. He took little part in the talk, only by an effort arousing himself to respond when addressed; and when dinner was announced he rose with a sigh of desperation.

Five years before, the cousins had been together in a State Street office. Tom, open-handed, headstrong, newly betrothed, had quarrelled with his father and was constantly in want of money. He was in a fashionable set, was just out of Harvard and exceedingly popular at the clubs. He was gay and perhaps a little wild, but never vicious. The intense pride of family which he inherited from his mother was a strong defence against any course positively evil, the brightness of the family fair fame being almost a religion with him.

Yet one black day Tom so far dallied with temptation as to forge his father's name to a check. It was rather the occupation of an idle moment when devilish possibilities presented themselves to his active mind than the intent to commit a crime. He had just written a letter to a pressing creditor saying that he enclosed the amount of a bill which Tom felt must be paid at all hazards, and in racking his brain over the possibility of obtaining the funds needful to make the letter true, he unluckily recalled how perfectly he was able to imitate his father's signature. The useless check-book at his hand was that of a bank where his father's credit was good, although the son's account was hopelessly overdrawn; and almost in less time than the telling the fated paper was written and folded in the letter. No sooner was it done than a realization of the crime of which he was guilty overwhelmed Tom with such a flood of shame and self-loathing, that even had he succeeded in instantly destroying the forgery he would always have blushed to recall his nearness to disaster.

Just how his cousin, whose desk was next his own, had divined his opportunity and been able to reach over and possess himself of the fatal letter, Tom was never able clearly

to understand. In the decorous office it had seemed impossible to create a disturbance when his demand for the paper's return had been refused, while any faintest surmise of the consequences of Gould's possession of it did not enter Baxter's mind until long afterward; not until the time came, indeed, when Richard deliberately began his black-mailing operations.

Thinking of the matter to-night, Tom cursed himself for the thousandth time that he had not defied his cousin, rather than by weak compliance brought himself deeper and deeper into the mire. It is probable that the consciousness of the guilt of yielding at least to the suggestion of temptation, and of having gone so far in the evil path as actually to write his father's name, had much to do with his allowing Richard to domineer over him. He firmly believed that had he been left to himself the check would never have been uttered; and it was certainly true that his impulse to destroy it had come as soon as the forged signature was written; but he could not forget that there had been a moment when his intention of reaping the benefit of his crime had been sufficiently strong to lead him to trace that signature with the utmost care.

Tom was keenly sensitive in regard to the family honor, and the idea of a breath of scandal filled him with the deepest dismay. He was led along, moreover, and his enslavement made more complete by one or two notes so carelessly worded that taken in connection with the check and the letter in which it was enclosed they might almost seem an admission of his guilt. It was a long time before he realized to the full the cruelty and the baseness of his cousin, and by the time it was clear to him he seemed too completely in the power of the other to escape. The dread of exposure, the realization of how damaging a story the other might make out of the evidence in his hands, had led Tom to yield to the first demands of Richard, and after that the rest followed as a matter of course.

When, a few months after the check was written, his father's death left him the possessor of millions, Tom believed his way to peace to be an easy one. Richard had as yet displayed no malevolence, and that he would sell the check Baxter had not for a moment doubted. With this one terror removed, he would be free to marry Ethel and retrieve whatever folly had marred his past.

But so simple and short-sighted a bargain

little suited Richard Gould's subtle and ambitious nature. He counted Tom's wealth as his already, but he did not on that account intend to lose his hold upon his cousin's influence as well. He longed for political advancement; and he was personally as unpopular as Tom was well liked.

Below this, too, was his life-long, instinctive enmity against his cousin. When they were boys together, Richard had hated Tom for outrunning him in races, for being handsomer, gayer, wittier, more facile than himself. He was full of bitterness that Tom was the heir to as many millions as his patrimony numbered hundreds; and last of all he was full of the implacable jealousy of a base man who sees his enemy win the love of the woman to whose favor he secretly aspires.

For five years he had been patiently scheming, making Tom his tool, and working toward the end which this evening should insure. As he led the way into the banquet-room, he was so full of self-gratulation that even his slow step assumed a certain quickness.

"Do you see how glum Hammond is?" he whispered to Tom gleefully, as they went to the dinner-table. "He'd like it better if if he were going to carry off the honors himself."

"They belong to him," was the bitter reply, "and he 'd have them if you were n't a scoundrel, and I an unmitigated puppy."

"Tut!" chuckled Gould. "Don't abuse yourself, and do try to be a little less funereal."

Tom glanced at George Hammond, the man who the best elements of his party believed should be candidate instead of Gould. Political issues this year were turning, as almost never before in the history of the country, on principles of uprightness and honesty. Party lines were everywhere being broken through by men who found conviction stronger than party fealty; and Tom himself felt his heart burn within him at the consciousness that the support he was to give his cousin was a direct violation of his sincere belief. To be honest he must have endorsed Hammond, who was set aside almost solely because the large interest which Tom represented was supporting the latter. There had been a good deal of adroit wire-pulling by Richard, but Tom's influence and Tom's millions had everywhere been his trump card. Baxter had an inherited place in the Boston political world, and in this particular matter no other man's word was of so much weight as his; so that he felt to

the full the responsibility of the nomination he was to make, which, although informal, would practically settle the matter.

Richard had taken his seat opposite his cousin, and with sparkling of lights, popping of corks, and babble of laughter, the dinner went on. Tom could not eat, and with gloomy eyes he looked down the table from his seat on the right of the eminent politician who presided. His money paid for this feast at which he sat so unwillingly, and to which he was brought to offer up his political honor as one more sacrifice to the implacable greed of his tyrant. His self-loathing was almost unendurable. It seemed to him that he must break out in some desperate deed. He replied mechanically to what was said to him; his face, like a well-managed mask, assuming a smile at the numerous jests which flew faster and faster. He thought of Ethel, and how she would despise him if she knew. He had never dared tell her the truth, but with painfully wrought excuses had explained the delay of their marriage, until even her perfect faith was strained to wonder. Sitting at the feast to-night, Tom ground his teeth and cursed the fate which made him wrong the heart that trusted him. He looked across at his

cousin, whose sallow cheek was flushed with triumph, and a bitter execration leaped to his lips at the ignoble bondage in which he was held.

An old purpose, long cherished, took new shape in his mind. Suppose he should rise in his place and lay bare all his whole wretched story to the honorable gentlemen dining here. After all, the ordeal seemed less dreadful than to stand up before them as sponsor for his cousin. Whatever was noble in his soul asserted itself, and he sat more erect as his determination took form. He might lose all that was dearest to him.

He shivered and set his teeth together at the thought of going out from this brilliant company a disgraced and blighted man. The impossibility of making them believe in the innocence of his intentions in writing that check came over him like a blast of icy air. That these men who had all his life given to him the honor which belonged to a member of the proud old family into which he had been born should to-morrow, ever, and ever after look askance when he encountered them, seemed to him a punishment too terrible for human nature to endure. The friends of his fine old father, the companions of his college days, the men he knew and

liked at the club, all seemed to come in review before him, passing his mental self as he sat there in the gay lamplight over the wine with averted faces and reprobating mien. To confess seemed to him to mean the abandonment of all honor and all happiness. He could not explain,—could he even persuade! He could only rise in his place and confess what he had done, and that he had borne the burden of it so long that it was intolerable to bear it longer. He would not even implicate Richard, he thought, with a spasm of contempt behind which, perhaps, lay some subtle self-gratulation. If those who heard could and did read between the lines of his story, that was not his concern; he would not even mention his cousin's name.

But Ethel? He almost groaned aloud as he thought of her. To tell the truth meant giving her up; and he reflected bitterly that not even the fact that he had never been so worthy of her as this confession would make him, could not change the fact that he could not ask her to unite her destinies with those of a man disgraced. He would be worthy of her, he said to himself, even if he lost her. He would not add to his baseness the crime of being false in this public act. It

was in no small degree a sense that to-night he was acting in a sort of public capacity which gave him the firmness to hold to the resolution to speak. The vital force which, despite all corruption, all sophistication, and all selfishness, does still live in our free institutions for every honest man, strengthened him to go forward. He might perhaps have lacked resolution to make this supreme sacrifice of himself had private issues been at stake, but in his fevered mind a throb of that undying patriotism which is the hope of the country woke all the nobility and fire of his soul. Whatever may have been the weakness or wickedness of his previous life, he was at this moment truly and nobly a hero. He set his teeth together and waited, phrasing what he had to say in his mind, and mingling it with the words in which he meant to tell the whole naked truth to Ethel at last.

The dinner meanwhile wore on, and almost before Tom realized it the air was full of cigar smoke, and the chairman for the evening was on his feet. What he said, poor Tom could not have told had his life depended upon it. He smiled to himself with dry lips as he fancied what would be the effect of the remarks he meant to make.

The applause which now followed, as a matter of course, would hardly be so ready then, he reflected with a ghastly sense of humor. He clapped when the chairman sat down, remarking to himself that he was glad the speaker's rather unusual plainness of mouth and forehead was not his; and then, almost with a shock, he realized that his cousin Richard was on his feet.

Mr. Gould had prepared himself most carefully for this ordeal, yet he was not wholly free from nervousness, and as he cleared his voice to begin, his air was that of a man who finds unexpected difficulty in getting his words to consent to be uttered. Tom, strangely grown calm, bit off the end of a cigar, and watched Richard with a critical air,—a sort of disinterested curiosity, as if he already looked back upon his past subserviency with vague wonder.

The speaker grasped firmly his coat-collar, drew a deep inspiration, and went bravely forward with his carefully collected platitudes. He began to quote statistics; he thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a handful of papers; selected a list of figures, and laid the others upon the table before him. Among them was the crumpled yellow envelope which Tom knew so well.

Baxter fixed his eyes upon it as a bird looks into the eyes of a snake which fascinates him.

In telling Ethel of it afterward, Tom declared that it seemed to him he could not move; that some irresistible power held him enchain'd; and that had not a special providence interfered in his behalf, that envelope would have gone back into Richard Gould's pocket. Providence on this occasion took the form of the chairman of the evening, who was seized with a sudden facetiousness, whether from the effect of generous potations or from a naturally humorous disposition is not apparent. In either case, it seemed to him an excellent joke to purloin the heap of letters lying beside Gould's plate, and distribute them about among those of the guests near him. The speaker, absorbed in his figures, noticed nothing; and fate, tired of tormenting poor Tom Baxter, directed that in the distribution the yellow envelope, with several others, should come into his trembling fingers.

When he held the envelope in his hand, his powers all re-asserted themselves; yet so firmly and fully had he determined upon confession that even now the need was removed the heroic resolve did not at once

vanish. He looked down at the envelope, and with a thrill of scorn so keenly realized in what a slavery he had been living, that it seemed necessary to make his declaration in order to regain his self-respect. To his highly wrought mood it appeared easier to speak than to keep silence.

In another moment, however, that common sense which prevents half the noble deeds which but for it would stir the world, reasserted itself, and he smiled at the folly he had almost committed. Yet it mattered very little, since before fortune put this chance into his hand he had conquered in his fight with self and dishonesty, and this was certainly nearer to being a hero than most men ever approach.

Holding the letters carelessly, he extracted the check from its wrapping, and passed the whole bunch to his next neighbor. That gentleman in turn handed them to the next man, and so in succession each guest handed them until, when Richard, warm with pride and his exertions, resumed his seat amid the customary applause, the whole pocket-full was gravely handed to him by the matter-of-fact man who sat next below him, and it was only after the dinner was over that he learned of their journeying.

There was a stir of expectation when Baxter, the chairman having introduced him, rose slowly to his feet. It was understood well enough what he had to do; and however-much his companions might wonder, they could not but agree that what he attempted he did with grace. Richard, watching him, was at once astonished and elated at the hearty and debonair air with which his cousin delivered his opening sentences. Briefly but forcibly, Tom ran over the salient points of the political situation, emphasizing the need of a strong candidate in the crisis which they all saw approaching. He stood easily, holding his unlighted cigar in his fingers, and gesturing now and then with the hand that held it. His general remarks concluded, he took from his vest-pocket a bit of paper, leaned forward to touch the end of it to the flame of a candle, and with it lit his cigar.

"I do not mean, gentlemen," he continued, when his cigar was well alight, and the last cinder of the burned check fell from his fingers, "to turn this social occasion into a caucus, but it is as well to come to an understanding of each other's feelings, in order to work with a harmony which shall be effective; so that I feel excused for mentioning for your consideration the name of a candi-

date upon whom I think we can all agree, and whom, so far at least as I can speak, we could heartily unite in supporting."

• Richard Gould modestly cast down his eyes, while a deeper hush fell upon the company. These men were politicians, and it is probable that their objections to the nomination they expected were based upon grounds of expediency rather than upon moral conviction; yet being in a situation where they realized that the better feelings of the masses might be taken advantage of, they regretted the loss of an opportunity to be so profitably virtuous. They were prepared to acquiesce, it is true, but they were not wholly reconciled to giving up the rare luxury of being at once honest and successful.

As for Tom, it was even then, with the ashes of the fatal paper lying before him, only by a mighty effort that he held himself to his task. He leaned forward nervously, mechanically picking up a rosebud. A swift train of thought brought back to him the scene he had looked at from the adjoining room a couple of hours before,—the sunset, the florist's boy carrying home the big bunch of roses; and it brought back, too, the remembrance of Ethel which those roses had awakened.

“ The name, gentlemen,” he said, drawing himself up to his full height, “ is that of George Hammond.”

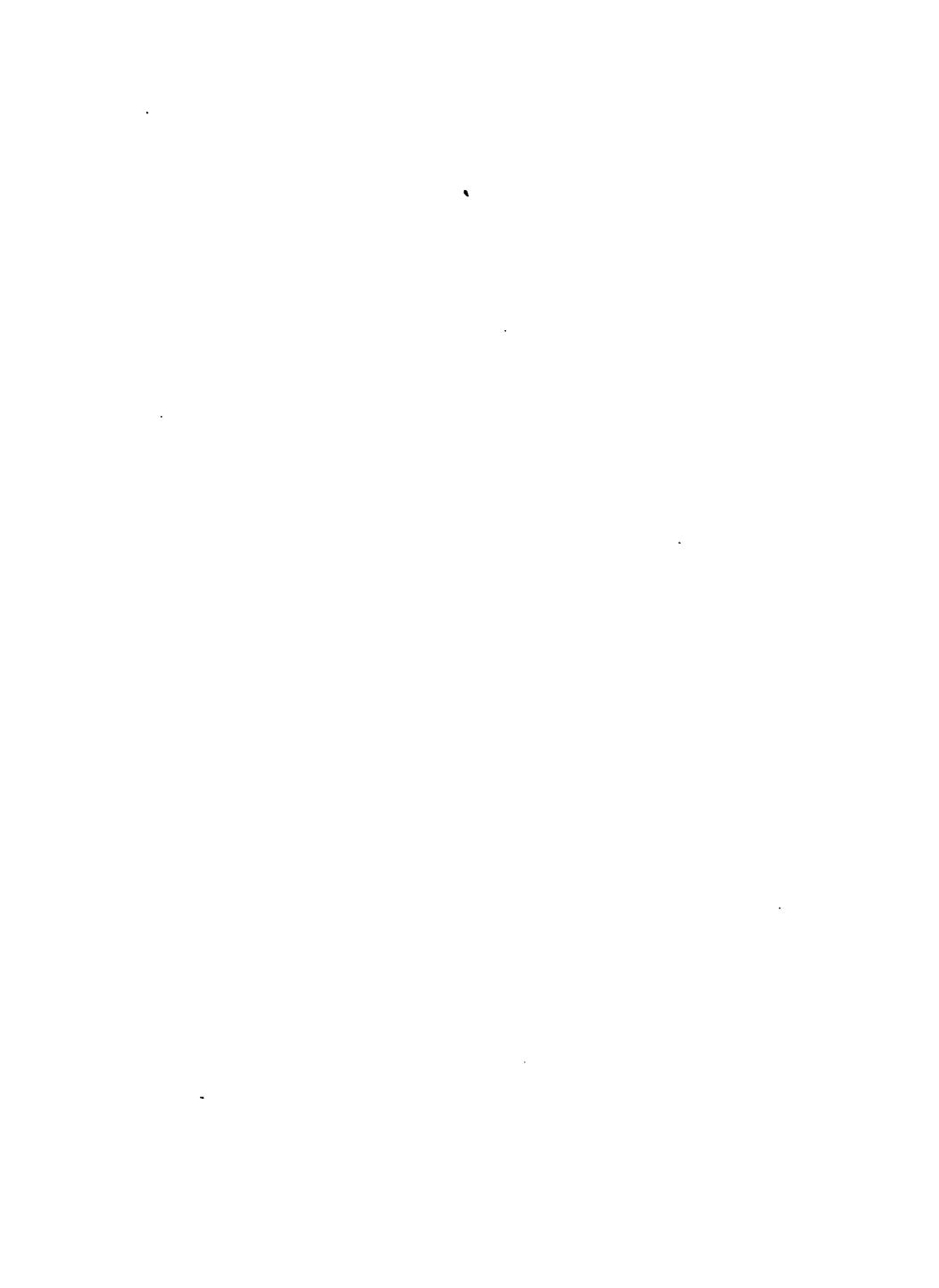
There was an instant of surprised silence; then a storm of applause.



Interlude Second.



AN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER.



AN AMATEUR PHOTOGRAPHER.

IT is a sunny afternoon in August, and upon the wide piazza of the Zents' seaside cottage is a group of young folk, standing or seated in chairs and upon the railing. One of them has a camera, and the discussion going forward deals largely with the best pose of the groups which Mr. Van Santly is about to take, although it may be added that other things come in for a word now and then.

"But where in the world is Mrs. Pearly?" asks Alice Zent, a saucy-looking creature of twenty or thereabouts. "If she is to be the centre of the group, we can't pose till she comes." •

"She went to change her frock," Miss Rangely answers. "She did n't like the one she had on."

"I will say that Mrs. Pearly does her duty by her clothes," observes young Huntly, who is sprawled in a hammock.

"In looks as well as otherwise," adds Tom Bailey, who is infatuated with the widow's charms.

"Oh, of course," retorts Dick Huntly cynically.

"Don't you think it would be splendid to go over to the old fort and have a group?" asks Blanche Ritter.

“What should we go toiling over to the fort for in this blazing sun?” demands little Miss Shaw, whose languid pose shows how averse she is to unnecessary exertion.

“Oh, it would be so romantic, and the old guns would be so good to pose against.”

“Miss Ritter wishes to be taken as the goddess of war,” Huntly says.

“Why not the goddess of peace?” she asks.

“Oh, that is Miss Shaw’s rôle; you could n’t think of interfering with her prerogatives.”

“Certainly not,” Miss Ritter answers, with somewhat more emphasis than seems absolutely necessary.

“Never mind, Miss Ritter,” Tom remarks; “all the women who have made any stir in the world, who have been remembered and be rhymed and all the rest of it, have been the cause of war, and so come under your jurisdiction.”

“She is welcome to them,” Miss Shaw puts in. “I wish her joy of the troublesome crew if she attempts to manage her subjects.”

“I suppose a woman is never thoroughly attractive and really good at the same time,” observes Jack Bannister abstractedly.

“That is an admirable thing to say to us,” cried Miss Rangely. “Ladies, we are either not attractive or we are not respectable. Take your choice.”

“I did not say respectable,” Jack answers with

unruffled coolness. "I said really good. You are all so attractive that I am convinced that you are none of you really pious and ethically perfect."

"Mr. Bannister knows that a woman would rather be called an abandoned wretch than unattractive," commented Miss Zent.

"Dear me," Van Santly interrupts, turning with the air of a man having upon his shoulders the responsibilities of the universe, "are n't you almost ready?"

"Take us as we are, Mr. Van Santly," Miss Shaw returns. "For my part, I cannot think of moving."

"Oh, but you must," he answers. "Of course, I cannot take you if you will not pose."

"Then I won't be taken."

"Oh, don't say that," he pleads. "You know I want to take you all."

"Just pose the rest of us," laughs Miss Ritter, "and Grace won't be left out for the world."

"Why must we wait for Mrs. Pearly?" asks Dick. "Let's have two or three groups before she comes."

"All right," answers Van Santly, whose only anxiety is to get to work.

"How furious she will be!" Miss Rangely remarks under her breath to Miss Ritter.

"So much the better," is the response, which savors less of Christian charity than might be desirable.

"Now keep perfectly still, all of you," Van Santly says. "Miss Shaw, please turn your face a little to the right — no, to the left, I mean. Miss Ritter, please look up a little more. Huntly, you can't wave that cigarette about in that manner."

"But, my dear fellow, I assure you that I can, for I do."

"But I mean that you must n't."

"Then why don't you say what you mean?"

"But you don't stop."

"Oh, I'll stop when the time comes, old fellow. I know this amateur photography. It will be ten minutes yet before you are really ready, and I don't see why I should let my cigarette go out so long beforehand."

Van Santly puts on an expression of long-suffering fortitude, and conceals his emotion by examining the indicator of his camera with great attention.

"Miss Zent," he says, after a moment's study; "will you pull your hand back a little? It is so far forward that it will be out of proportion."

The hand is withdrawn with a jerk.

"My hands are bad enough when they are properly taken. I don't think that I could stand having them made any worse."

"I knew a girl that had her engagement broken because she sat for an amateur photograph," observes Tom with much solemnity.

The young ladies instantly forget all about their

poses, and turn to him with the keenest interest.

“Who was it?”

“Why was the engagement broken?”

“Tell us about it.”

“Ladies, ladies,” Van cries in despair; “don’t change your positions. I was just ready to begin.”

“Who was the girl?” Miss Ritter asks of Tom, ignoring the photographer altogether.

“Yes, who was she?”

“Oh, she was a girl I knew. The man she was engaged to made a row about her being photographed with a lot of people on a hotel piazza.”

“Look here, Bailey,” cries the exasperated Van, “I should think that you might be in better business than trying to break up things in that way.”

“Trying to break up things? My dear fellow, I never for an instant thought of such a thing. Drive ahead.”

“But tell us about the girl,” insists Miss Shaw.

“Oh, there is n’t anything more to tell.”

“But why did he object?”

“Oh, just a matter of taste. He thought it was n’t the correct thing.”

The young ladies regard one another with looks of uneasiness, and are apparently completely out of conceit with the whole idea of a photograph.

“Don’t you think?” Miss Ritter says, rising and turning almost back to the camera, “that we had better wait for Mrs. Pearly, after all?”

"Wait for me?" the vivacious widow cries, as Mrs. Pearly appears with great sweep and frou-frou of draperies. "I am very sorry if you find it so unpleasant to wait for me."

"It is always unpleasant to be deprived of Mrs. Pearly's company," Tom Bailey responds with mock gallantry.

"But then there is the anticipation of her coming," Dick adds in the same tone.

"Thank you for nothing," the widow answers. "You shall both be disciplined for making game of me."

The young men groaned in concert.

"She means it, Tom. I can always tell by the way she says a thing whether she really means it or is only trying to hoax somebody."

"After that you will get no mercy," the widow cries, rapping his fingers with a fan.

Her raiment is wonderful to behold, her gown being of black lace over yellow silk, and much behung with glittering drops of yellow glass. A large diamond star blazes upon her breast, and others twinkle in her hair.

"Heavens! But is n't the widow got up to do execution!" Huntley murmurs under his breath to Miss Rangely.

Mrs. Pearly turns upon Mr. Van Santly with all her customary animation.

"There, you horrid man! I 've taken all the trouble to put on this gown because you said you

would like to take me in it. I hope you appreciate the sacrifice."

"Is it a sacrifice to make one's self beautiful?" puts in Dick, mockingly.

"It is needless to gild the refined gold," Tom responds.

"Come," the widow declares, turning upon them sharply. "I will not be quizzed. If you do not behave I will take Mr. Van Santly around to the other piazza and have my pictures taken all by myself."

"Oh, do ; that is just what we were longing for."

"That is civil to Mr. Van Santly."

"Oh, Van does n't mind. He 's hardened to it."

"To be a successful amateur photographer," Dick declares, "it is necessary to lay aside all human sensibilities."

"Except selfishness and vanity," Tom adds with frightful candor.

"That is a nice thing to say," Mrs. Pearly responds. "Don't mind them, Mr. Van Santly," she continues, turning to that gentleman, who has apparently been so much engaged upon his camera that he has not noticed what has been said. "We appreciate you, at least."

"Will you all please get into position?" the photographer asks with unabated cheerfulness. "We will take a few instantaneous views, and then try some time plates."

“If anybody thinks that I am going to put my yachting-dress beside that gown of Mrs. Pearly’s,” remarks Miss Ritter, “he is little acquainted with my disposition.”

“Or with the feminine mind,” Tom adds.

“Oh, that is nonsense,” Mrs. Pearly interposes. “I want you for a foil. Besides, that frock is awfully becoming.”

“I knew this gown was n’t much,” Miss Ritter whispers to Miss Zent, “but I did not think that it was bad enough for her to afford to praise it !”

There is at this moment so little interest shown in the entire scheme that Van Santly is evidently thoroughly discouraged. He goes from one to the other, and as soon as he can get two or three in place, he is harassed by the discovery that they are moving about or that the others have escaped him altogether.

“I never did see anything like it,” he cries in anguish. “You won’t be quiet an instant.”

“I don’t think that I will be taken anyway, Mr. Van Santly,” Miss Rangely observes, with an evident endeavor to appear as if the idea was at that instant born in her mind. “I don’t think that it is quite the thing to be taken in groups this way.”

The young men laugh significantly; but the girls, who have been longing for this escape, and who have besides made up their minds that nothing will induce them to be taken in their plain

frocks with the widow in her splendid raiment, instantly take sides with Miss Rangely, and declare that they will not be taken.

“The suggestion of a broken engagement is too much for them,” Jack says, laying down the glass with which he has been endeavoring to identify a yacht in the offing.

“Whose engagement is broken?” demands Mrs. Pearly with instant interest.

“Bradford Turner’s,” Bannister responds without an instant’s delay.

Mrs. Pearly changes color slightly, but she holds herself wonderfully well in hand, in view of the fact that she is perfectly well aware that every person present knows that her cap has been set for the millionaire mentioned for a couple of seasons, and that she was in a rage when his engagement to another was announced. To cover the pause which follows, she takes the glass and looks over the bay.

“What yacht is that?” she asks.

“It is the *Thelga*,” Jack answers, with something like a wink to Tom and Dick.

The widow turns instantly to Van Santly, laying the glass in the hammock beside Huntly.

“Come, Mr. Van Santly,” she says; “if nobody else is to be taken, you may take me.”

“Is it an engagement?” Tom asks.

“Don’t be impertinent,” she retorts.

“Is n’t the *Thelga* Mr. Turner’s yacht?” in-

quires Miss Ritter with every appearance of innocence.

“Yes,” is the reply, to which all the girls listen in the hope that there will be something added.

“Come, Mr. Van Santly,” the widow remarks briskly, “I have been ready this age. Where shall I stand?”

“Just where you are.”

“Oh, no; it is much better to stand here, Mrs. Pearly,” Miss Ritter breaks in.

“Why not try the corner of the piazza, by the post?”

“Or there by the door.”

“Why not have her taken as if she were just coming out of the door?”

“I think it would be better for her to be sitting on the steps.”

“Why not have her sitting in the hammock holding the banjo?”

“Or the spy-glass?” adds Tom wickedly.

All these suggestions are poured out at once upon the unhappy photographer, who begins to feel that he is in a teetotum. He turns appealingly from one to the other, and in the end says to Mrs. Pearly:

“Well, do whatever you think best.”

“You don’t expect me to pose myself, do you?”

“The photographer,” Mr. Bannister observes judiciously, “always handles the subject’s head a great deal, and then says: ‘Fix your eyes just

here, and look natural. Wink often enough to relieve the eyes.' If you have n't learned that, you don't know the A B C's of your duty."

"Nobody is to handle my head," the widow declares.

A chorus of feeble laughter greets this retort, and then there is a renewal of suggestions in regard to the pose.

"Why not pose as if you were walking away, and just turn your head over your shoulder?"

"There, that's good, keep that way."

"Oh, no ; that's too stiff."

"A little more to the left."

"Hold your chin up a bit."

"That fan is too far down."

"Just a thought to the right, now."

"There, that is perfect. Now ready. Oh, bother ! "

"What is the matter now?"

"I've been and put in the wrong spool, and this is the time plate."

"Then take a time picture."

"Can you stand still without a rest?"

"Of course I can. Go ahead."

"All right. Ready, now."

"I say," interrupts the voice of Jack Bannister at this critical moment. "I suppose you know that all that yellow toggery will take black."

"Take black?" exclaims the widow, in dismay.

"Why, I shall be as solemn as a nun."

She abandons entirely her pose and turns to the consideration of this important question with a suddenness which leaves the photographer completely in the lurch.

"You might go and put on another gown," Miss Ritter suggests a little maliciously.

"Nonsense," Mrs. Pearly responds. "I have had all the dressing I can stand for one afternoon."

"Besides," Van Santly interposes, "the light is getting fainter. We must have the pictures now or not at all."

"I don't see why you could n't have said that half an hour ago," the widow says, turning to Bannister with marked disapproval.

"Oh, I did n't remember that I had been asked."

"Then you had better have kept quiet altogether," the long-suffering Van rejoins.

There is a good deal of chatter and suggestion of various sorts, and in the end Mrs. Pearly declares that nothing will induce her to have her picture taken.

"Oh, don't say that," Van pleads. "Here I have given up a yachting-party this afternoon on purpose to take you."

"Well, I don't want to be taken, and that is the whole of it."

She accordingly turns and retires with a great frou-frou of her yellow and black draperies.

Van Santly looks after her a moment, and then turns to the others for sympathy.

"It's too bad, old fellow," Tom remarks lazily, "that you should n't get a single plate."

"Yes, it is," one of the girls adds, "after all the trouble you have taken."

"Oh, I am satisfied," he responds with a grin. "I have two or three good snap-shots at Mrs. Pearly that ought to come out first-rate."

"Have you really?"

"Yes. I thought I should get a better expression if she did not know when she was taken."

"I hope that you have n't played the same trick on us."

The significance of the photographer's smile is too evident to be mistaken.

"The wretch! I believe he really has."

"Girls, he has really taken us all."

"Well, what was I here for?" Van inquired, gathering up his belongings. "I've had experience with girls before, and I knew it was best to take a plate when I had a chance."

Whereupon there is an effort to get his camera away from him, but as the young men take no part in it he has little difficulty in making his escape.

His wedding gift to Mrs. Pearly, which was presented a couple of months later, was a capital picture of herself in an admirable pose on the piazza, with a glimpse of her future husband's yacht just visible in the offing over her shoulder.

Tale the Third.

THE MAN WHO COMMITTED BIGAMY.



THE MAN WHO COMMITTED BIGAMY.

I.

Twas the most ridiculous of situations. To have lived thirty years under one name, married under it, and then be suddenly called upon to change it, was enough to make even a harder-headed man than Philip Sweetser a little confused; and when it came to his wife's taking a new name also, and that quite a different one from either of his, it is no wonder that Phil declared that the personal identity of the family was wholly lost, and that for his own part he knew neither who his spouse nor himself had become.

It came about in this way. Phil and his wife were not related, yet they had, from birth, an aunt and an uncle in common, which is a genealogical puzzle which he may solve who cares to take the trouble, although, for a proper understanding of the matter, it should be added that two more headstrong, crotchety, whimsical old celibates than these

same relatives never snubbed dependents or quarrelled with friends. In their wilful fashion they were very fond of Philip and Margret, and to them they willed the ample fortunes with which fate had severally provided them. They departed life at about the same time; and Aunt Merryweather left her property to Margret on condition that the latter assume the family name of the testator, while Uncle Farebridge bequeathed his wealth to Philip upon terms precisely similar. It made no especial difference to Phil. He was not unwilling to assume the proud old name of his mother's family; and with legislative aid the change was soon effected.

But with Margret the situation was more complicated. Had she been single she could have shifted her name temporarily, changes of this sort being among the accidents which are supposed to enter into the calculations of every young woman. The idea of taking a name which was not her husband's was another thing, and too ridiculous, she said; it suggested the weak-minded vagaries of so-called strong-minded women far more closely than was at all pleasant; but as for having Aunt Merryweather's money go to those disagreeable Stark girls, Margret declared she would sooner take forty names, or have no

name at all. And so it ended in the invocation of legislative powers on behalf of Mrs. Sweetser as well as of her husband, with the ultimate result that the young couple became legally known as Mr. Farebridge and Mrs. Merryweather, a confusing collocation of cognomens which put them in very serious doubts as to who they might really be.

It chanced that about the time matters were legally settled, the date arrived when the pair had planned to visit Florida to avoid the rigors of the Boston spring.

“But what are we to call ourselves?” Margret demanded, as they were discussing details. “You say you cannot reach Magnolia until a week after I do, and it will certainly look peculiar enough for Mrs. Merryweather to announce that she is expecting her husband, Mr. Farebridge, in a few days. I simply shall refuse to recognize you when you get there. It is too utterly ridiculous for our names to be different.”

“Nonsense,” replied Phil. “You could n’t help rushing to meet me if you were called Van Schneippenhausenstadtfelt, and I, Peter Snooks. You adore me too much to resist me, especially after a week’s separation.”

“Adore you! you horribly conceited wretch!” cried his wife. “I ’ll never speak

one word to you when you come to Magnolia, if I die of lonesomeness. I won't even honor you with a glance of my haughty Merryweather eyes, as Aunt Margret used to say. Oh, you shall see!"

II.

PHIL had more than half forgotten the threat of his wife when he stepped upon the hotel piazza at Magnolia, but a single glance at the self-possessed little woman who sat chatting with an elderly lady in frosty curls showed him what was before him.

The faintest flush swept over Mrs. Merryweather's smooth cheek as Mr. Farebridge, in passing the ladies, lifted his hat, but no other sign would have indicated to the most acute observer the fact that she had any previous acquaintance with that gentleman. She went serenely on with her embroidery, apparently as intent upon its conventional beauties and as deeply interested in Miss Spart's gossip as before. She had been prepared for this encounter; she had known to a minute the probable time of her husband's arrival, and had taken her place here for the especial purpose of ignoring him. She soon

excused herself and went to her room, where she executed a series of girlish pirouettes, indicative of wild glee, but hardly compatible with the highest ideals of matronly dignity. Then she made the most bewitching of toilettes, and went down to dinner.

Fate or Phil so contrived as to fix that gentleman's place opposite his wife's at table. Mrs. Merryweather's first feeling at this arrangement was one of pleased amusement, yet she felt it to be in a manner a challenge. Her love of mischief asserted itself, and throughout the meal, although she was unusually talkative, she totally ignored Mr. Farebridge. He made some advances in the good graces of Miss Spart, whose seat was next his own, discovering that they had common acquaintances in the North ; and by the time dinner was ended, patience not being the strongest trait of his character, he thought himself in a position to make use of that elderly maiden's good offices.

" May I ask the name of the lady opposite ? " he questioned, as they left the table. " She was sitting with you on the piazza when I came. Her face seems familiar."

" That is Mrs. Merryweather, " answered Miss Spart, delighted to be able to give information. " She is from Boston. Have n't

you ever met her? She is very intimate with the Horace Grays of whom we were speaking."

"Oh, that is why her face seems so familiar!" was Phil's evasive reply. "Shall I be trespassing too much upon your kindness if I ask for an introduction?"

"I shall be pleased to present you. She will certainly be glad to meet a friend of the Horace Grays."

But Mrs. Merryweather had been quietly watching the pair, since in the course of their conversation they had reached the parlor, and divining the intent with which Miss Spart now approached her, she turned away with well-feigned unconsciousness and stepped through the long window upon the piazza. A mischievous gleam lighted her eye. She saw Captain Cornish, an officer on leave whose acquaintance she had made during her week at Magnolia, smoking alone just outside the parlor window, and immediately joined him.

His wife having fled, Farebridge, perceiving that he was outmanœuvred, freed himself from Miss Spart as speedily as possible, and betook himself to the piazza. As he came through the long window, his wife turned to go to her room, and in passing Phil let her

fan, whether by accident or design even she herself was hardly sure, fall at the feet of the latter. He picked it up; but as she took it his grasp lingered upon it long enough to compel her eyes to meet his.

“Has n’t this gone far enough, Margie?” he murmured under his breath.

“Thank you,” she returned aloud, and he stood aside to let her pass.

III.

IT was perhaps half an hour later when a servant tapped at Margaret’s chamber door, bringing a note. The superscription, which she saw at once was in her husband’s hand, ran, —

“To Mrs. Margaret Merryweather, introducing Mr. Philip Farebridge.” It read as follows: —

DEAR MRS. MERRYWEATHER, — Will you allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Philip Farebridge? I have known him all my life, and can unhesitatingly speak of him as a capital fellow, whom you will find it a pleasure to know. I take the opportunity of adding my unchanging regards, and with unfailing devotion I remain,

Very sincerely yours,

PHILIP SWEETSER.

Margret hesitated a moment. Here was the way out of her difficulties ; but, femininely enough, at this indication of a readiness on her husband's part to humor her caprice, she became unwilling to end the farce. The cleverness of his device amused her, but it also stirred her up to match against his her skill in parrying. It was hardly ten minutes after Phil despatched his missive before the servant returned it to him accompanied by a tiny note, which said : —

“ Mrs. Merryweather regrets missing the acquaintance of Mr. Farebridge, especially when he is so cordially indorsed by an apparently disinterested third person ; but as she is not aware of having in the world a friend whose name is Philip Sweetser, she is sure there must be some mistake in the delivery of this letter to her.”

This note despatched, Margret sat waiting for nearly an hour, expecting some further demonstration on the part of her husband ; but as at the end of that time nothing had occurred, she concluded to retire. She was both amused and vexed. The intricacies of the situation grew more and more evident. She lay tossing about in bed, vainly trying to sleep, becoming more and more restless every moment.

She heard the sounds in the hotel subside gradually. The beams of the late-risen moon struck at length the top of her window, throwing a mellow light through the chamber. Margret lay listlessly watching the golden glow as it moved slowly down the curtain, when her attention was suddenly arrested by a shadow which began to define itself upon the window-shade. It was the silhouette of a man's hat, beneath which the shape of a head soon made itself visible; then the form of a man's shoulders, and in time his whole figure, except so far as it was obscured by the balcony chair in which he sat. He was smoking, and something in the pose of the shadowy head convinced the watcher that the nocturnal visitor was her husband.

Margret had raised herself upon her elbow, following the development of the figure upon the curtain. When it was complete she slipped softly out of bed, and dressed hastily. Her hurried toilette completed, she hesitated a moment, then walked boldly to the window and drew up the shade.

The window was open, and at the first sound the smoker turned toward her. He started as the moonlight fell upon her face.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "Is that you, Margie?"

"Hush!" she said in a petulant whisper; "you knew it was I, or you wouldn't be here."

"I hadn't the faintest idea where you were," retorted Phil; "I was mooning here, trying to think what you meant by treating me so, and —"

"Do speak lower," she interrupted; "somebody will surely hear."

"What if they do?"

"Do you want to compromise me?"

"Compromise you?"

"Yes, compromise me! I should think you'd care more for the reputation of your own wife than to have it known she was talking with a strange man at midnight from her chamber window."

He threw back his head and laughed a long, chuckling laugh, which broke out afresh under every attempt to smother it.

"Margie," he gurgled, "you Paddy! you'll be the death of me! I never heard such a delicious bull in my life!"

"For heaven's sake, Phil!" she exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, leaning out of the window in her eagerness and putting her hand over his lips. "Miss Spart's room is directly over mine, and she has ears like a lynx."

"I'll come inside," he said, rising lightly

and making a motion to put his foot over the window-sill.

“No, no, no,” she cried.

Then suddenly closing the window in his face, and locking it, she sat down on the floor and burst into foolish tears. Her husband stood helplessly regarding her by the clear moonlight. He tapped on the pane softly once or twice; then as she paid no heed, he trimmed his cigar and walked away with an air of injured dignity, and was seen no more that night.

IV.

MRS. MERRYWEATHER dressed herself with especial care upon the following morning, and never had she looked prettier than when she took her seat at the breakfast-table.

Her husband was already there, but with the first glimpse that she had of his face, she perceived that he was seriously vexed. He gave not the slightest heed to her presence, not even acknowledging her arrival by the stirring of an eyelid. He finished his meal silently, and before Margret had done more than sip her cup of coffee he left the table.

Half an hour later, as she sat at one end of the piazza, while her husband strode up

and down the other, her gloomy cogitations were interrupted by the appearance of Miss Spart, who with an air of mystery took her seat by Margret's chair and drew out her embroidery.

"A very handsome man!" she said, after a moment's silence.

Mrs. Merryweather started with a sudden consciousness that she had been intently watching her husband, and that her companion had intercepted her glances.

"Who?" she asked, endeavoring to appear indifferent.

"Mr. Farebridge. You looked as if you thought so too."

"Oh, is that his name? Who is he? Who knows him here?"

"I don't know," Miss Spart answered; "but—"

A significant pursing of the lips left the hearer to infer that awful things remained unspoken.

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing. Only—"

"What are you hinting about?" Mrs. Merryweather asked, with a shade of impatience in her tone. "What do you know about him?"

"Nothing. Oh, I assure you, positively

nothing," returned the other; "only I thought I heard his voice on the balcony last night—in the night, you know—and that fast Mrs. Turner's room is almost under mine."

"Fast? I'm sure I never thought Mrs. Turner fast."

"Oh, she must be, or she would n't be talking on the balcony in the night with a man. I could n't be sure it was he, for I have n't heard his voice much. Though, now I think of it," the gossip went on eagerly, as a new idea seized her, "he asked me to present him to you. I'll do it now, and that will give me a chance to hear him speak while I remember the sounds of last night."

"But—" began Margret.

"Oh, you need n't mind," Miss Spart interrupted. "He must be respectable, for he's a friend of the Horace Grays."

And away swept the excited little woman, shortly to return with Mr. Farebridge.

"Mr. Farebridge, Mrs. Merryweather;" and before Margret had time to recover herself she was sitting there talking to Phil as if they were the veriest strangers. It was too supremely ridiculous; yet there sat little Miss Spart, shrewd, alert, eager for a morsel of scandal as is the early bird for the proverbial

worm, and Margret was far too plucky to yield herself to the tongue of any woman.

She scarcely followed the earlier portions of the conversation, with its usual common-places, which needed no very close attention. But all her energies were aroused when her husband threw down the gauntlet by saying: "It is strange, Mrs. Merryweather, that I never heard the Grays mention your name. Horace Gray was my chum at Harvard, and I have known him all my life."

"Indeed!" Margret returned coolly, raising her eyes to meet his, and ignoring the main point of his remark. "I should have said that Mr. Gray's Harvard chum was a Mr. Sweetser. I certainly have met such a man at the Grays'."

"There was a Sweetser in our class," retorted Phil. "Capital fellow; the girls all used to rave over him."

"It can't be the one I mean, then," said she severely. "No girl could possibly rave over him."

A stony silence succeeded, broken by an inquiry from Miss Spart upon the length of time Mr. Farebridge remained at Magnolia.

"That depends," he answered carelessly. "There is nothing in particular to detain me here."

“No?” Mrs. Merryweather said with unnecessarily sarcastic sweetness; “then why do you remain?”

“Inertia.”

“The most useless thing in the universe,” Margret observed, endeavoring to cover the sting of the words by a sudden graciousness of manner, “is an idle man.”

“Come, come,” Miss Spart interrupted briskly; “that is far too personal, Mrs. Merryweather. I’m sure an idle man is no worse than an idle woman; and he is still a man, you know.”

“And therefore necessarily good for something,” laughed Phil.

“No — therefore not expected to be good for anything,” retorted his wife.

“Good!” he said. “Now we shall get on. As long as we can confine ourselves to general abuse of the sexes, Mrs. Merryweather, we are safe. It is individual application that is dangerous.”

“Oh, that is no matter,” she returned, “if it is n’t personal. For instance, if I said that a man who put both himself and his wife into a ridiculous position should have wit and skill enough to find a way out of it, that would still be a remark of a general nature.”

“Certainly; and if I answered that under

those circumstances some women would be so stubborn or so stupid that not even Solomon could get them out of the simplest fix, that too would be only a moral that runs at large."

"I am neither stubborn nor stupid," poor Margie burst out, tears starting into her eyes.

"My dear Mrs. Merryweather," exclaimed Miss Spart, whose presence alone prevented the conclusion of the whole misunderstanding at that moment, "of course Mr. Farebridge meant nothing of the sort. How could you think so?"

"It is said to be a feminine trait to make a personal application," Phil said. "I was only speaking of the wife of the man in the hypothesis."

"We women are easily hurt," Margret said in a low voice, rising and moving away.

She was wounded and miserable. In imagining the comedy which she and her husband were to play she had fancied a sort of stage courtship, a little high-flown and unreal from the consciousness on the part of the actors that they were merely playing. A light, half-mocking gallantry was what she expected, or at least so she had told herself, although in truth with a woman's sentiment she had also expected the ring of genuine

love too. Tears were in her eyes as she now sought a seat in a retired part of the piazza, and it was with difficulty that she refrained from breaking down altogether.

A step she knew approached quickly.

“Margie,” her husband said, coming up to her, “how long—”

Miss Spart’s appearance cut the question short.

“Why, here you are!” she cried volubly. “What made you run away? Have you discovered, Mr. Farebridge?”

“No,” he replied, “but I hope to, for Mrs. Merryweather has been kind enough to promise to drive with me this afternoon. I will have the carriage at the door about three, if that suits your convenience.”

And before either lady could utter a word of comment or suggestion, he had lifted his hat and withdrawn.

V.

THE afternoon was enchanting, the semi-tropical scenery sufficiently novel to both Philip and Margret to hold their attention, and for the first half-hour of their drive there was nothing to indicate any shadow of disagreement between the pair.

At the end of that time they found themselves upon a secluded portion of the road, when Phil coolly put his arm about his wife and kissed her. She resisted a little, but ended by returning his embrace with much fervor.

“Oh, dear Phil,” she sighed, “how good it does seem to be ourselves again, and not somebody else! I think it has been perfectly fiendish since you came. It seems a week since last night.”

“Then why did you send back my letter of introduction? That was particularly horrid of you.”

“Of course I did n’t think you’d give up so,” she returned. “You were a great goose.”

“And a great goose not to break in when you locked the window in my face, I suppose.”

“Oh, well, it does n’t matter,” was the feminine retort. “It’s all over now anyway.”

For the next half-hour the couple delivered themselves over to the felicities of billing and cooing, diversified by sudden perils into which they were brought by Phil’s erratic driving, little of his attention being left for his horses. Then all their joyousness was overthrown once more.

“Of course,” the husband remarked, “now

we can tell, and have done with all this uncomfortable nonsense."

"Oh, no, Phil," Margie cried. "Just think what a horrible scandal that hateful Miss Spart would make out of it. She is capable of anything."

"What could she make out of it but the truth?"

"But nobody could ever be made to understand it, and it really is too ridiculous. Can't you think of something else, Phil dear?"

"Yes," he retorted savagely. "I can think of several things,—the price of stocks, for instance, or the transit of Venus, or of how I hope Uncle Farebridge and Aunt Merryweather are sizzling in the most tropical latitudes of purgatory for making such diabolical wills."

"Why, Philip Sweetser! how can you talk so? It is sacrilegious!"

"You have no acquaintance by that name," he interrupted.

"And my aunt too!" she went on, without heeding him; "and your own uncle!"

Her husband broke into a bitter laugh.

"You have a logical mind, Mrs. Merryweather," he observed. "Perhaps you can think of something."

“Oh!” poor Margie sobbed, the tension of her nerves finding relief in the tears which flowed fast, “you have no heart at all. You — ”

“There, there, Margie, I — ”

But, being wise from past experiences, he attempted no further argument, only gathered her into his arms, and allowed her to sob her emotions into his left breast-pocket.

VI.

THE result of the further conversation between Mr. Philip Farebridge and Mrs. Margaret Merryweather may be inferred from the fact that when they reached the hotel, about dusk, the gentleman went to the office and wrote upon the register, “Mr. Philip Farebridge and wife,” — a simple line, which yet proved sufficient to send a perfect whirlwind of gossip and conjecture through the quiet corridors of the hotel, where nothing so exciting had occurred since the elopement of Clara Dolby with young Smythe, two winters before.

When husband and wife entered the dining-room together that night, Margaret felt the eyes of every person present, and was

far more completely covered with confusion than even in the blushing days of her honeymoon.

"Really," Miss Spart murmured, leaning across the table, "I was never more surprised in my life. If I had known you were going off to get married this afternoon, I would at least have thrown a slipper after you. Is it true that you were engaged, but had quarrelled? That's what I told Mrs. Turner. I was sure of it this morning."

"Oh, we have known each other a long time," said poor Margret, her cheeks crimson; "but we have never quarrelled."

The next morning it was even worse. Phil at first noticed nothing amiss; but his wife's keener feminine sense detected hostility in the air the moment she entered the breakfast-room. On Miss Spart's face she read fresh disapproval in every line, while Mrs. Turner's bow was so slight that if such a salutation had not been expected, it would scarcely have occurred to a beholder that it was intended for a bow at all. Plainly, the tide of gossip had been setting strongly against the young couple; and Margret wondered what new development could have given it so much sudden rancor.

She was enlightened later in the forenoon,

when she received a crisp note from Miss Spart asking the favor of a few minutes' private conversation; and although Philip protested that it was sure to be a case of unwarrantable interference, his wife insisted upon going to the spinster's room. She was received with great solemnity.

"Sit down," Miss Spart began impressively. "Poor dear!"

Margret laughed. It seemed natural enough that a lady of so strongly marked spinsterhood should regard any woman who had committed matrimony as having fallen into a dreadful abyss.

"Don't laugh," Miss Spart went on, with rather unnecessary pathos. "What I have to tell you is too dreadful. I can't bear to have you laugh."

"What in the world —" began Margret.

"There! there!" the other interrupted; "do be calm. Don't get excited. It is n't your fault."

"My fault!" echoed her guest. "What are you talking about? What is the trouble?"

"That man," Miss Spart said, becoming more and more melodramatic, "has deceived you."

"What man?"

THE MAN WHO COMMITTED BIGAMY. III

“That man you think is your husband — Mr. Farebridge.”

“Deceived me?”

“Yes, deceived you. Do try to be calm. I felt it my duty to tell you. Mrs. Turner says she remembers having seen him in Boston, and his name is n’t Farebridge at all, but Sweetser.”

“But he had it changed,” Margret said, not at all understanding Miss Spart’s drift.

“But that is n’t the worst. He is married already!”

“Married!” echoed the other. “Why—”

“But he has committed bigamy,” ejaculated Miss Spart. “He has —”

But her listener, upon whom the situation suddenly dawned, burst into laughter which prevented further speech,—a tide of laughter which she could not check, with which she struggled in vain for a moment; then, turning her back at once upon Miss Spart and politeness, she fled to her own sitting-room, and laughed herself into hysterics, trying to give her husband an intelligible account of the charges against him.

VII.

IT was impossible to make Phil take things seriously. The more severely virtuous the lady boarders looked, the colder the glances which followed himself and his wife, the droller the affair seemed to him, and the jollier he appeared. He scandalized Margaret by chuckling in the very face of Miss Spart, who cut them both dead after Mrs. Merryweather's abrupt flight from her chamber. He had taken the landlord into his confidence, and the two men would be seen whispering and nodding together like arch conspirators, and only the fact that his wife was unhappy cast any cloud over his boyish jollity.

"Never mind, Margie," he comforted her; "the Grays are coming this week. We'll be very exclusive, and associate with nobody but them."

And in a day or two the Grays did arrive. The Farebridges were out driving when they reached the hotel, and almost the first question Mrs. Gray asked of Miss Spart was, —

"Where are Mr. Farebridge and Mrs. Merryweather?"

"It is n't Mrs. Merryweather any longer," Miss Spart replied, pulling a terrible face; "it is Mrs. Farebridge."

"Is it?" returned Mrs. Gray lightly. "It does n't matter. But where are they?"

"I don't know," hesitated the spinster,— "or, that is, I do not care to know; but I think they are driving together."

"How funnily you speak! Don't you think Margaret is lovely?"

"Ahem! Handsome is that handsome does," Miss Spart observed, with a conspicuous lack of originality.

Mrs. Gray stared in amazement.

"I think we cannot be talking of the same person," she said rather coldly. "The people of whom I spoke are the best friends my husband and myself have in the world."

"But," gasped Miss Spart — "bigamy!"

"Bigamy?" echoed Mrs. Gray. "What has bigamy to do with it?"

"Everything. The man I mean has committed bigamy, and I don't see why he is n't arrested for it. And his wife — or the woman he calls his wife — knows it, for I told her myself. He came here, and they pretended to be strangers, and the next day they went off and got married. And I told her —"

“You told her!” exclaimed Horace Gray, who had thus far remained a silent listener of the conversation; and he burst into laughter as boisterous and unquenchable as Phil’s had been. “Oh, that is too much! That is beyond everything I ever heard!”

In the midst of this outburst the offending Farebridge and his pretty wife drove up to the piazza; and Margret, at the imminent risk of her neck, flung herself out of the carriage into the outstretched arms of Mrs. Gray.

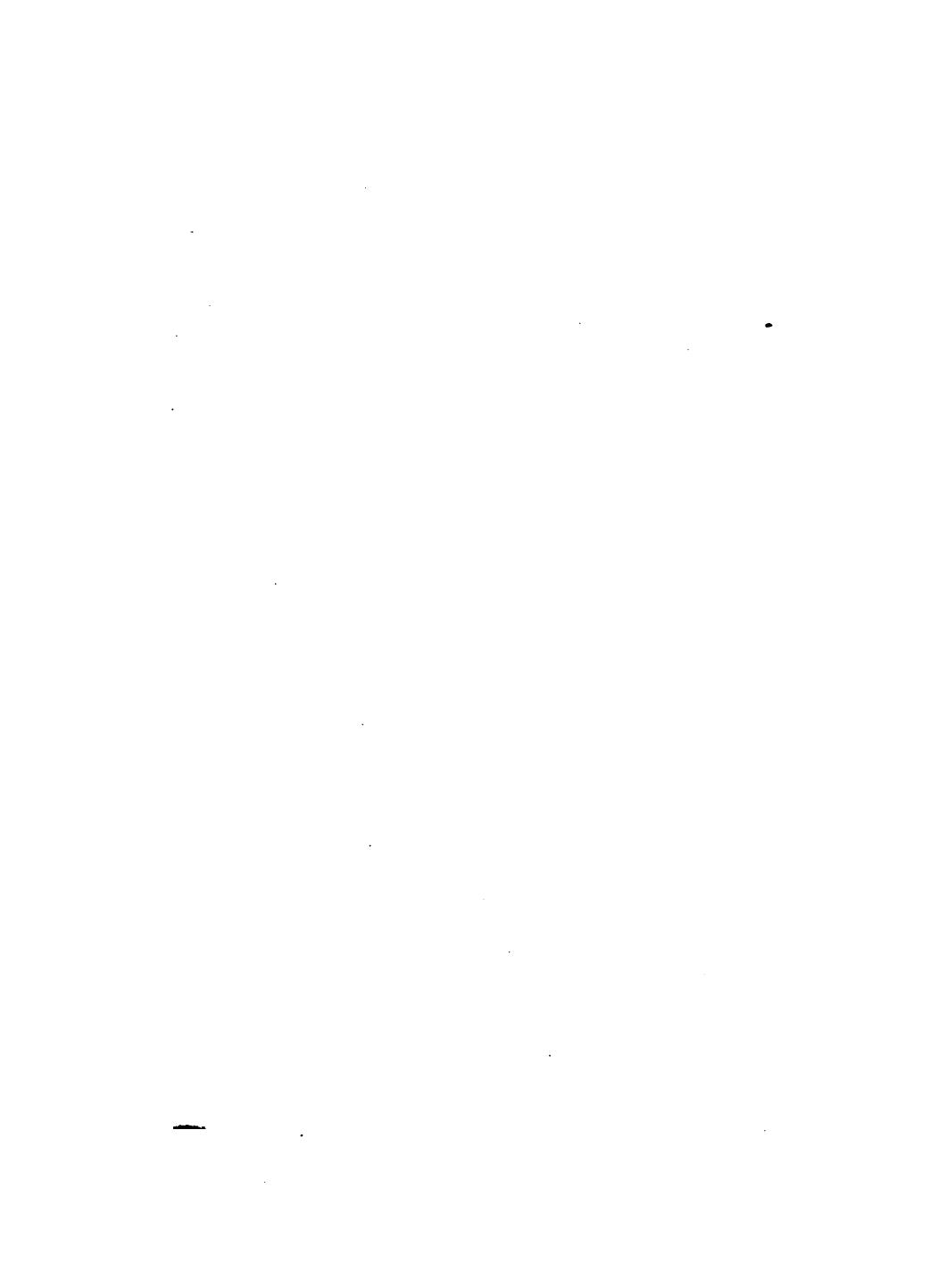
“Phil, old fellow,” cried Horace Gray, loud enough to be heard from one end of the piazza to the other, “how are you? I hear you’ve been committing bigamy.”

“Bless your ugly mug!” responded Phil joyously. “So I hear myself. Good lark, is n’t it?”

And in half an hour everybody knew all the details of the affair, for the landlord considered himself released from his bond of secrecy; and although some sharp criticisms were made behind their backs, Mr. Farebridge and his wife encountered nothing but the most deferential and apologetic manners thereafter. As for Miss Spart, she so far humbled herself as to remark,—

"I am sure, Mrs. Farebridge, it was strange you thought me in earnest about your husband's being a bigamist. You must have noticed that I was hurt at your suspicion."

But in her heart of hearts she never forgave either Phil or Margie.



Interlude Third.



AN AMATEUR REHEARSAL.



AN AMATEUR REHEARSAL.

It was rather a pleasant room, and decidedly a pleasant morning, and certainly no one should have hesitated to say that the two young people in the room were pleasanter than the room or the morning either.

In the first place, Rose West was pretty enough to make a young man lose his head, or an old one his heart; and her cousin, Philip Simpson, had apparently utterly surrendered both. Mistress Rose assumed that all Phil's devotion was simply her right, and took his adoration quite as a matter of course; laughing when he sighed, mocking when he protested, and altogether so quizzing and tormenting him that fifty times a day he was ready to rush away in desperation, vowing never to see her again. Yet always just as the limit of his patience was reached, the arch little coquette would so far relent as to bestow upon her despairing lover some pretty smile, or some trivial gracious word, that cost nothing and meant nothing, but which brought him to her feet again, ten times more enamoured than before.

Rose was an elocutionist, and her cousin Phil insisted that the flattery and attention she received

had spoiled her. And, in truth, she did receive praise enough to have turned any head not most securely placed upon its supporter's shoulders. How much was for her reading and how much for her beauty it might have been hard to say. Phil protested that it was entirely the latter, but Phil was a prejudiced witness. The poor fellow was so madly jealous of every word she spoke, and of every faintest smile which wreathed her lips, that it drove him nearly wild to think of her bestowing smiles and soft-voiced words upon the public, while he had to content himself with mockery and derisive laughter.

Matters were somewhat complicated, too, by the fact that Simpson had aspirations for the stage himself, and this very morning he had been trying to inveigle Rose into giving him a lesson in elocution ; only, as it was part of his tactics to pretend that he had no great respect for her powers, — lest any praise should tend to confirm her in that public career which he hated, — he found matters somewhat difficult to manage.

“ I ’ll tell you, Rose,” he said, at length, after much circumlocution, “ I ’m going to read you a speech I ’m studying. You can be audience, you know, and it will be improving to you.”

“ How extremely kind you are,” she retorted ; “ but you are always telling me that I know nothing about elocution, so I ’m afraid I can’t really appreciate it.”

“That is just it,” Phil said patronizingly. “You represent the common, untrained intellect. I want to see how I should affect an ignorant audience.”

“Thank you!” returned Rose, with a malicious twinkle in her eye. “But if you really want to know how the audience is affected, I shall have to criticise.”

“Very well,” assented he, with a great affectation of reluctance, this being precisely the thing he desired. “Only don’t interrupt too much. It is the scene from ‘The Lady of Lyons,’ where —”

“Oh, I know,” Rose broke in. “It’s ‘nay, dearest, nay,’ of course; every callow reader begins with that. Why don’t you take something that is not so hackneyed? I think the New England Primer would be good; it has not been read much, and it would exactly suit your style: —

‘In Adam’s fall
We sinnèd all;
My Book and heart
Shall never part;
The Cat doth play
And after slay;
The Dog —’”

“Now, Rose West,” protested Phil, “you are enough to provoke Job. If this is the way you mean to act, I may as well stop.”

“That is the way my efforts at philanthropy are met! I was only advising you for your good. But go on, by all means. I’m devoted to that

particular scene. It is moonier than the moon. Go on ; nobody but a milksop can really do it."

Phil glared at his pretty tormentor, but he had learned by bitter experience that it was hardly worth his while to attempt to get the better of her in a war of words ; so, after a few further protestations, he plunged headlong into his reading. Throwing himself into a lackadaisical attitude, with his book in his left hand and his right stretched forward entreatingly, he began : —

“ ‘ Nay, dearest, nay — ’ ”

“ Now, Phil,” interrupted Rose, “ you are too ridiculous. Why should I neigh? I’m not a horse.”

“ Bother ! ” returned the reader hotly. “ ‘ Nay, dearest, nay, if thou wouldest have *me* — ’ ”

“ But I would n’t ! ” she laughed. “ We should sound well snorting and whinneying at each other like a pair of young colts ! ”

“ Look here, Rose ; if I am to read at all, you must keep still.”

“ But how are you to improve, if I don’t correct you ? ”

“ But you need n’t break in at every second word.”

“ Then read better.”

Her cousin looked at her in a mind divided between a desire to shake her and a longing to kiss her rosy, laughing lips. Then he cleared his throat and went on again, changing his emphasis

wildly about from one word to another in a vain attempt to suit his exacting critic.

“‘ Nay, dearest, nay, if thou wouldest *have* me — ’ ”

“ But I won’t, sir ! ”

“‘ Nay, dearest, nay, if *thou* wouldest have me — ’ ”

“ I should save some other woman from a great misfortune, I ‘ve no doubt ! ”

“‘ If thou wouldest have me *paint* — ’ ”

“ Why, Phil Simpson ! I never paint ; and it is too mean in you to ask me to ! Especially with such a paltry inducement as getting you for a reward ! ”

“‘ If thou wouldest have *me* paint — ’ ”

“ I don’t want you to paint.”

“ Rose West ! ” cried poor badgered Phil ; “ I won’t read another word unless you behave ! ”

“ I *am* behaving beautifully. It is a great sacrifice for me to find fault with you, but you do read abominably.”

“ I don’t either. It is only — ”

“ It is rude to dispute a lady,” Rose returned. “ I say you read like the old exercise in the reading-book. ‘ *Shall* you ride to town to-day ? Shall *you* ride to town to-day ? Shall you *ride* to town to-day ? Shall you ride *to* town to-day ? Shall you ride to town *to-day* ? ’ If thou wouldest have me paint ; if *thou* wouldest have me paint ; if thou *wouldst* have me

paint; if thou wouldest *have* me paint; if thou wouldest have *me* paint; if thou wouldest have me *paint*; if thou wouldest have me paint *thee*! ”

There was another pause, the two cousins gazing into each other's eyes,—he with an expression appealing, annoyed, half-angry; she mischievous, defiant, laughing. At length he concluded to go on again.

“ ‘ Nay, dearest, nay; if thou wouldest have me *paint the home* — ’ ”

“ ‘ Paint the home,’ you ridiculous boy; do I look like a house-painter! ”

“ ‘ If thou wouldest have *me* paint the home — ’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, paint it, by all means, if you like; but I prefer a brown-stone front that would n't need painting.’ ”

“ ‘ Nay, dearest, nay; if *thou* wouldest have me paint the home — ’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, it was n't my idea at all, Phil,’ put in the incorrigible Rose. “ You offered to do it yourself, without any suggestion from me.”

“ Do you mean to let me read or not?” demanded Phil wrathily.

“ Oh, read, by all means,” retorted she briskly. “ There is more variety to your reading than to any I ever heard before. You develop a multiplicity of meaning from the simplest sentence which is perfectly marvellous. You'd make an epic out of

‘ Intery, mintery, cutery-corn,
Apple seed and briar thorn.’

You'd move an audience alternately to tears and laughter simply by repeating the multiplication-table. Oh, Phil, you're positively a genius!"

"You always quiz me," Phil said sulkily.

"Quiz you! What an idea! Wasn't I to tell you what I thought of your reading?"

"But you needn't be so absurd."

"Oh," said Rose, "I do that to show you what you really say. You are so original that you can't help making the form mean a great many things that the author never thought of."

"Nonsense! I'd like to know how much better you could read it yourself."

"I am too modest," answered Rose demurely, "to suppose I could do half so well; but I'll try to show you how you read, if you won't be angry."

"Of course I won't. Go ahead. Here's the book."

"Oh, I won't read the same thing; how will this do?" and she repeated with most exaggerated tragic emphasis: —

"Thomas T. Tattermus took two T's,
To tie two tups up to two tall trees;
To frighten the terrible Thomas T. Tattermus,
Tell me how many T's —'

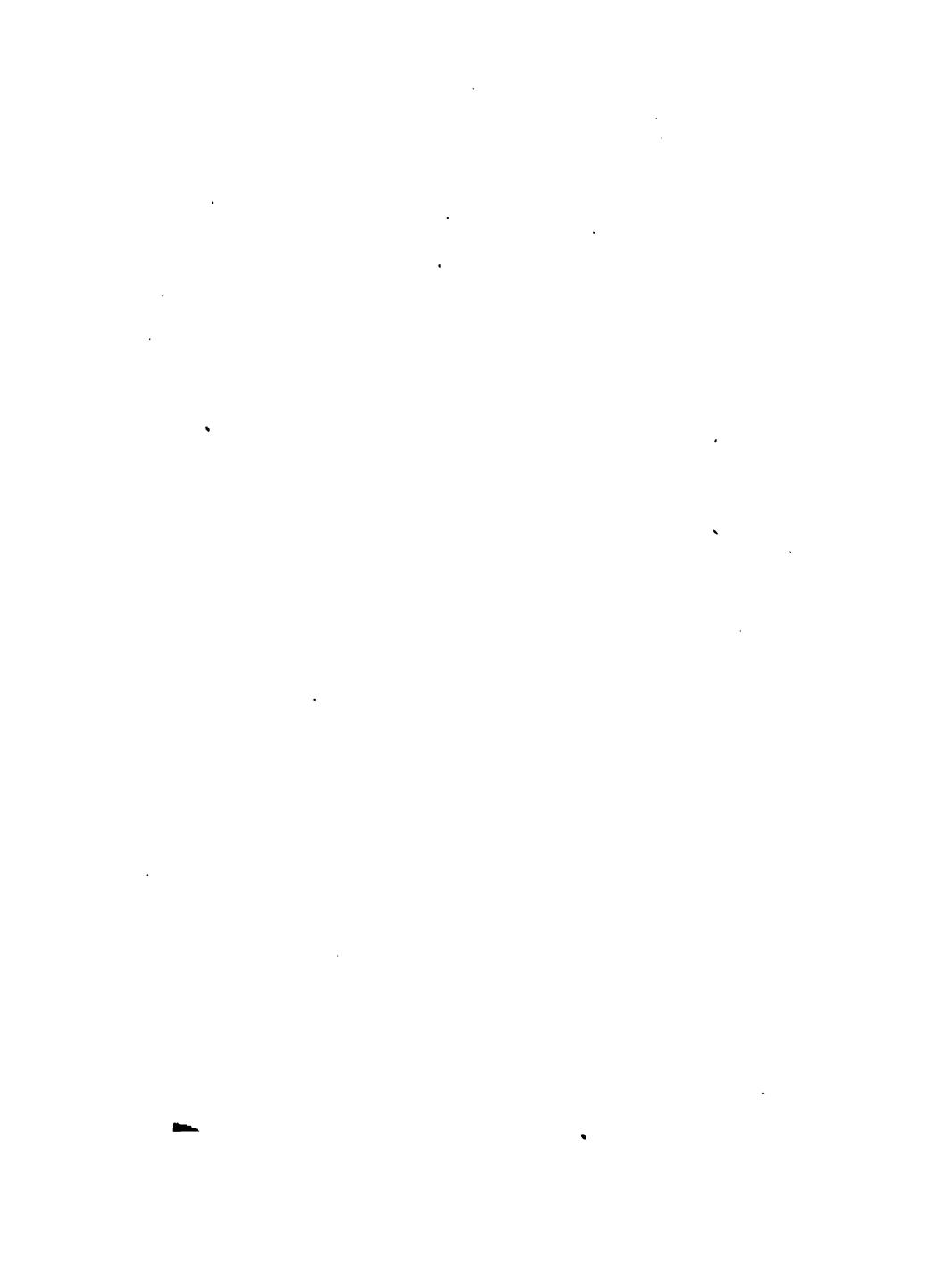
Stop, Phil! Ha, ha, ha! Phil, come back!"

But the discomfited Phil had precipitately fled the room.

Tale the Fourth.



IN MARY JANE'S HOUSE.



IN MARY JANE'S HOUSE.

T is not impossible that at some period of its discouraged existence the little house may have been painted, but of such refinement not the smallest trace had escaped the effacing touch of time. It was now of an unbroken tint of slaty drab, varied only by the dull red of its one chimney and the small windows of greenish glass. It stood a few rods back from the country road, upon a slight knoll, into which it had the appearance of slowly sinking as from year to year the annual fall "banking" made a higher and higher mound beneath its low windows. A ragged cluster of lilac-bushes stood upon one side of the front door, and there were still signs that at some remote period a similar clump had stood over against it. In the late spring shoots with wide green leaves would still rise from the old roots, but they never had vigor enough to survive the next winter.

Two women were coming across the fields toward the house one morning about nine o'clock, moving with that awkward stride which betrays the fact that New England countrywomen so seldom walk outside of their own doors. They were both in their working-clothes, although one had on a hat which was incongruously decorated with large and badly crumpled artificial roses. There was in their air a certain flavor of excitement and expectancy which would to any observer have betrayed the fact that there was something unusual in prospect. They advanced with eager haste, brushing with their heavy gowns the dew which still lingered in the depths of the aftermath, and talking with a rapidity strangely at variance with the habitual restraint and deliberation of country life.

"I d' know's I'd ought t' wore this hat," the taller of the pair said, tossing her head with the consciousness of being arrayed with undue splendor upon a week-day ; "but them young ones 'd got off somewhere 'th my sunbunnit, 'nd I could n't take the whole day to find it."

"Oh, thet don't make no sort o' difrunce," her companion replied. "There ain't nobody there but old Mis' Jones. She went over

'bout sunup to lay 'er out. Si stayed there all 'lone larst night. I should n't think he'd 'a' wanted to."

"Good gracious, Lindy," responded she of the hat, "ef Mary Jane c'u'd live there day in an' day out for ten year with a dead man buried in the suller, I sh'd think Si might stay there one night. He ain't scared o' nothin'."

Linda stopped to twitch away from her gown a withered branch of eglantine which with tenacious thorns had caught at her as she passed.

"D' you know," she said, sinking her voice into a sort of confidential half-tone, "I've been just crazy to get inter that house. For the life o' me I never could make out what Mary Jane did with all them things; an' —"

"I know," the other interrupted eagerly. "Ain't it queer! Mis' Hatherway told me that that time she went to Boston, mo're 'n three years ago, Mary Jane sent by her for a whole lot of things: tissoo paper, an' worsted, an' perf'rated paper, an' beads, — more 'n two dollars' worth. She said Mary Jane give the money inter her hand after she got onter the stage, with a list o' the things. She said she meant to kep' it, but somehow she lost it in one o' them big stores where she got

the things. I expect she was consider'ble confused."

"I cal'ate she were," Linda assented; "but the thing is, what 'd she do with all that stuff? I tell you, Hannah, there 's some myst'ry 'bout Mary Jane, an' I 'm goin' to find out what 't is 'fore I leave that house, or my name ain't Lindy Ackley."

The pair had come to a stone-wall thickly overgrown with a confused mass of raspberry-bushes, golden-rod, aster, and poison ivy, over which they made their way with some difficulty. They were in the enclosure in which stood the lonely old cottage toward which they were bound, and, either to regain their breath or from some not unnatural shrinking now that they were almost in the very presence of death, they slackened their steps a little.

"D' you ever hear," Hannah asked, edging up to her companion and glancing toward the house as if the dead woman lying there might still chance to be able to overhear her, "that Steve Davis an' Mary Jane ust to set up tergether?"

The woman stopped and regarded her with the most vivid interest depicted upon her dull face.

"Him that's buried in the suller there?" she demanded.

"Yes, him. I've heard that they ust t' sit up tergether consider'ble," replied Hannah, with all the delight which a woman derives from the communication of a fresh bit of gossip. "'F course 'twas much 's twenty years ago, but they ust to go tergether. Pelig Barns told me. He know'd Steve Davis well."

"Well, I want 'r know!" Linda exclaimed. "Was that the reason they kep' the body in the suller?"

"Oh, fer th' land sake, no! 'F course not. He was diggin' a well down there an' it caved in on him, an' when they tried ter git 'im they foun' he 'd gone down in a quicksan'; so they could n't git 'im."

They had come close to the weather-beaten house by this time, and passing around to the back door they paused an instant.

"Be yer goin' t' knock?" Hannah asked.

"Knock?" Linda responded. "Why sh'd I knock just for Mis' Jones? 'T ain't her house 'ny more 'n 't is mine."

She opened the door as she spoke, and together they entered the dingy little passage which led them into the kitchen. It was a poor place, and already there had fallen upon it that mysterious air of neglect which betokened the removal of the occupant of the dwelling from earthly concerns. The two

women looked about them with an eager curiosity, but they did not stop.

"I've been in 'most every room in the house," Linda said, leading the way farther into the cottage. "I've been in the kitchen an' her bedroom an' the fore-room, an' I've looked in the winder 'f the front entry, an' there ain't nothin' in any of 'em."

They passed through the room which opened out of the kitchen, and at the door of the chamber beyond they encountered the corpulent figure of Mrs. Jones, who had been alone in the house for some hours, performing the last solemn offices for the dead.

"Wall, I d'clare for 't," she exclaimed, with an unctuous smile. "I'd jest 'bout made up my mind that there war n't nobody comin' near this place ter-day."

"Well, yer see," said Hannah, "one o' the twins had the muligrubs some for a spell in the night, an' that kind o' upset things to our house. I hope yer ain't nee'd no help nor nothin'."

"Oh, 't war n't that," Mrs. Jones replied, smiling more expansively than ever, "but it's sort o' lonesome like, y' know. I've got her fixed beautiful, an' she looks real nice an' young,—f' her, that is. Mary Jane was the

perfect spit 'f her mother. I always said that."

"Yes, she took consider'ble after her mother's family," Linda assented.

With the air of a mistress of ceremonies, Mrs. Jones turned and led the way into the room from which she had come, where in all the solemn simplicity of death lay that which had for more than half a century been known as Mary Jane. The coarse sheet, snowy white, had settled into heavy folds as it hung over the edge of the bed, showing the outlines of the figure it covered. Mrs. Jones folded back the cloth from the face of the dead, that faded homely face which the women had known so long, and a sudden silence fell upon them. It was a moment before they spoke again, and then their voices were hushed and softened.

"Sh' looks awful peaceful," Linda Ackley said presently.

"Don't she," Hannah returned. "Well, she knows more 'n the whole of us now."

"Yes," Mrs. Jones assented; "that's a fact. I never see a corp' that looked more real rested, as yer may say."

They stood for some moments discussing the details of the thing which had once been Mary Jane, lingering a little, genuinely

touched, yet with an awkward air of not knowing exactly how to behave in a situation so strangely solemn; and then the practical side of life once more resumed its accustomed hold upon them.

“Where’s her folks?” Mrs. Ackley asked. “Hain’t she got cousins over to the Corners?”

“Oh, yes; she’s got cousins, but her an’ them hain’t never set horses t’gather,” was the reply of Mrs. Jones, who made it a point of professional pride to know all that there was to be known concerning those to whom she ministered, they being dead. “There’s two of ‘em coming over t’noon to take per-session. Poor Mary Jane! I sh’d think she’d turn over in her grave to have them two old Trafton women haulin’ over her things. I know *I* should; and she never could abide either of ‘em. Well, it’s what we’re all a-comin’ to.”

The trio moved slowly out of the chamber of death, and without putting into word their intention, they began an examination of the house, which if conducted with perfect calmness was yet sufficiently searching. They made their frank comments as they proceeded from room to room and from bureau to closet.

Throughout all this examination, which became more and more like a search as the

possibilities of the house were gradually exhausted, there was evident in the manner of the three women an eager curiosity and a baffled air of not finding that which they had expected. They glanced at one another now and then with perfect understanding, but it was not until they returned to the kitchen after going over the house that their disappointment was put into word.

"Wall," observed Linda, leaning back against the kitchen table and setting her arms akimbo, "I'll own up to it; I'm clean beat."

"So be I," Hannah rejoined. "Them things ain't in this house nowhere, that's one sure thing; an' I vow I d' know what Mary Jane ken h' done with 'em."

Mrs. Jones made no reply. It was not her way to acknowledge that she was baffled. She was meditating deeply, and revolving in her capacious breast what could have become of the treasures of fancy work which it was the opinion of the neighborhood that Mary Jane had wrought, but which she had steadfastly refused to display to her friends; but she only assumed an air which was evidently intended to convey that she knew more than she was prepared to tell, and changed the subject.

"I d' know's 't my business," she said, "t'

do no cleanin' up fer them Trafton women, but f' Mary Jane's sake I guess I 'll slike up a little. 'F you 'll go down suller an' git the tub, I 'll jest wring out them sheets an' put things to rights some before they get 'ere."

Hannah took a candle and departed down the dark stairs which led to the cellar of the cottage, while Mrs. Jones and Linda consulted in regard to the work which must be done. Suddenly from beneath they heard the voice of Hannah cry out,—

“ For the lan' sakes alive ! ”

With one accord the two women rushed to the head of the stairs,

“ What is it, Hannah ? ” they cried.

“ Sakes o' Goshen ! ” responded the voice from beneath. “ Jest you come down here.”

They needed no second bidding, but plunged down the narrow and steep stairway, nearly falling over each other in their eagerness. They found Hannah holding her candle up over her head so that its light should fall upon a strange thing before which she stood.

“ Wall, I d'clare for 't,” exclaimed Mrs. Jones; “ ain't that the beatin'est you ever did see ! ”

Mrs. Ackley stood with her jaw dropped, transfixed with astonishment at the wonderful

structure which the rays of the dim candle lighted. There in the cellar stood a sort of catafalque, evidently made of boxes covered with white cloth which was here and there stained with mildew from the dampness of the place. Along the sides were hung wreaths and garlands of dried ground-pine, in which the wild white immortelles of New England pastures were mingled with flowers clumsily wrought of colored paper and beads and worsteds. Bows of crape fastened the garlands at the loopings, while along the base of the erection ran a strip of cardboard, twisted and warped by the damp ; and upon this cardboard was laboriously embroidered that passage of Scripture wherein mention is made of Korah, Dathan, and Abirah as having "gone down quick into the pit."

"Wall, I never see nothin' to beat that 'n all my born days!" Linda said. "What's that worked all 'round the bottom there?"

"That's the text what was preached to at his fun'ral," Mrs. Jones replied. "I've hearn Pelig Barns tell o' that. There was a Methodist minister over to the Corners preached it, an' they say 't was a pow'ful movin' discourse."

"Wall, it must 'a' ben 'n awful sight o' work to make all them letters," Hannah commented. "'F Mary Jane'd hed my twins to traipse

'round after, I guess she'd never gut no time for thet sort o' thing."

"Seems ef Mary Jane must 'a' just put her whole soul inter it," Linda observed. "She must 'a' ben years an' years a-doin' it. Wonder where she learned how t' make them tissoo paper flowers. They're real tasty."

"I must say," Mrs. Jones remarked with a professional air, "thet she done well to keep things to herself so close. There hain't nobody never hed the fust idea what she was up to."

"She must jest 'a' lived for it," Mrs. Ackley said.

"'T must 'a' ben 'n orful sight o' work," Hannah repeated, stooping to examine more closely the decorations of the tomb.

"I sh'd think she'd ben scared f' fear she'd got inter thet quicksan' herself," said Linda.

"Oh, that was all boarded over 't the time Steve Davis's swallered up," Mrs. Jones explained. "Light them two kar'scene lamps there, Hannah, 'n let 's see it all lit up. Poor Mary Jane, she must 'a' taken a sight o' comfort in it."

The lamps were lighted, casting a flickering and uncertain glow over the tawdry pile, and for half an hour the three women gloated over its fantastic adornments. They called

attention to this detail and to that, they speculated upon which work had been done first, and upon the length of time which the whole had occupied; and all the time they kept exclaiming over the strangeness of this freak on the part of Mary Jane.

The ludicrous side of this homely exhibition of the love which Mary Jane had borne to her lover, swallowed up alive by the pitiless quicksand so long ago, did not present itself to the mind of these women whose lives had been lacking even such few pale gleams of imagination as had cast their light over Mary Jane's sad and lonely heart. They appreciated better than women of far more culture might have appreciated the touching aspect of this grotesque memorial. In all their comments there was still a faint respectfulness, as if they were speaking of something not without a certain religious character. No cenotaph of costly marbles wrought by the divinest hand of genius could have conveyed to them so full a realization of the tragedy and of the imaginative comfort as came to their minds through this incongruous erection, damp and time-stained. This spoke a language which they understood, and it appealed at once to their feminine sympathy and to whatever rudimentary æsthetic possi-

bilities they possessed. They lingered over it with respectful and sincere admiration, almost with tears in their eyes.

"Seems's ef I can't abear to hev them Trafton women pullin' it all to pieces," Linda said at last, smoothing with her toil-stained fingers the crumpled leaves of a rose of pink tissue paper.

Mrs. Jones turned toward her with the air of one who has made her mind up beyond peradventure.

"These Trafton women ain't a-goin' to lay no hand on it," she announced. "They ain't a-goin' to see it, even; what's more."

"Why, how you goin' to help it?"

"I'll tell yer how I'm goin' to help it," Mrs. Jones answered, setting her face in an expression of grim determination. "I'm jest a-goin' to take it all to pieces before anybody sees it but jest us."

"Oh! Mis' Jones, you ain't really?"

"Yes, I be too."

"I don't b'lieve you darst to."

"Humph!" sneered Mrs. Jones. "'F you think I'm skeered o' them skinny Trafton women from over to the Corners, you don't know Adaline Lowisy Jones, I ken tell yer that. I'm goin' to put them flowers 'round inside the coffin, an' them wreaths 'f ever-

lastin' on the outside; an' there won't be nothin' down here for no Trafton women to larf at, an' don't you forgit it!"

The two women stood astounded at her boldness for a moment, and then Linda Ackley brought forward a last argument, which seemed to her so strong that she almost trembled as she said it.

"But, Mis' Jones," she said, "them Trafton women, bein' the lawful heirs, might take the law on yer."

Mrs. Jones rose to her full height, her face flushed with feeling.

"Law!" she echoed. "I don't care one single straw for the law. What I'm goin' by now's the gospel. I'm goin to do's I be done by 'f I was that poor dead critter upstairs. You may help or you may leave alone's you please; but I'm goin' to stan' by Mary Jane, 'f she *is* dead."

She turned, and with fingers which were none the less reverent for being strong and coarse, began to detach the garlands from the cloth to which they were fastened. Her two companions hesitated a moment, and then they too began to undo the work upon which Mary Jane had lavished the passionate tenderness of years.



Interlude Fourth.



AN AFTERNOON TEA.

AN AFTERNOON TEA.

[The drawing-room of Mrs. De Lancy. - Mrs. De Lancy is seated upon the lounge beside Mr. Jack Pluton. Mrs. Crane and Mr. Danton in easy-chairs close by.]

Mrs. De Lancy. Of course I never believed it. I said when I heard it that Amanda Jameson was far too shrewd to make a scandal when she had so little to gain by it.

Mr. Pluton. That is the way I look at it. She'd never flirt with a fellow who could not give her bonbons and flowers. Her affections were always in direct proportion to a man's credit at the florist's.

Mrs. De L. Poor Jack ! How dreadfully hard on you !

Mrs. Crane. Oh, I'm sure you don't do her justice. She is a girl of so much principle.

Mr. Danton. But there was such a close connection between principle and interest in her mind.

Mrs. De L. You are always so horribly cynical, I hate you.

Mr. P. Don't reward him for being sarcastic !

Mrs. De L. Thank you, Jack. We will call it square. May I give you tea, Mr. Danton?

Mr. D. Thank you; no more. I have already destroyed my nerves.

Mrs. C. Then why not have another cup? It is certainly delicious.

Mrs. De L. Then I may fill your cup, Laura?

Mrs. C. Of course. I am happy to say that I have no nerves.

Mr. P. I had suspected it, do you know.

Mrs. C. Because I have endured you so long?

Mr. P. Oh, come now! That is sheer brutality.

Mrs. De L. Don't spare him, Laura. I'm not equal to keeping him in order myself.

[Enter Miss Jameson and Miss Corbet.]

Mrs. De L. I am so glad to see you, my dear. We were just speaking of you.

Mr. P. Yes, Mrs. Crane was telling us that she heard you had returned.

Miss J. Returned? From where?

Mrs. C. Mr. Pluton misunderstood. I said I had not seen you since I returned. (*Aside to Mr. P.*) I'll murder you for that!

Mrs. De L. That is undoubtedly what Mr. Pluton was thinking of.

Miss J. It would be kind of you, Mr. Pluton, to remember that we danced together at the Wentworths' ball three days ago.

Mr. P. Oh, I thought that you might have

taken a short trip somewhere. A sort of excursion, perhaps.

Mrs. C. Does any one know who is to lead the german at the Fentons'?

Miss J. (aside to Miss Corbet) You see, Alice, that they know all about it!

Miss C. (aside) The more reason for facing it out.

Mrs. De L. You are silent, Miss Corbet.

Miss C. I am enjoying the intellectual conversation.

Mrs. De L. So nice of you to put it in that way!

[Enter Tom Barton. There is a stir among the ladies. Miss Jameson walks away to the window in the back part of the drawing-room, and becomes absorbed in the view.]

Mrs. De L. So glad to see you, Mr. Barton. Why did you not bring Mrs. Barton with you?

Mr. B. Oh, she is somewhere about town, and I could n't find her, don't you know. She may turn up here at any moment.

Mrs. C. You must be anxious to have her.

Mrs. De L. Of course he is. Will you have a cup of tea?

Mr. B. No, thanks. Tea so near dinner-time is a thing I never could stand, don't you know.

[He speaks to the ladies, and then joins Miss Jameson at the window.]

Mrs. C. Really, it looks like an appointment.

Miss C. (looking pointedly at Mrs. Crane and Mr. Danton and then at Mrs. De Lancy and Mr. Pluton) It is so much the fashion nowadays for married people to flirt that one is prepared for anything.

Mrs. C. The men so seldom seem to care for the girls nowadays that it is singular to see anything of this sort.

Miss C. Yes; flirting is apt to be confined to the married women.

Mrs. De L. The young women —

Mr. D. Are so dreadfully in earnest, were you going to say?

Mr. P. Come, had n't we better proclaim an armed armistice, and talk about somebody who is not here to defend herself?

Mrs. C. With all my heart. Do you know, they say Mrs. Barton is awfully cut up about her husband.

Miss C. Why?

Mrs. De L. Oh, how awfully severe! Don't you think he is worth caring about?

Miss C. I meant to ask what reason she could have.

Mr. P. Oh, none in the world. Why should a woman care if her husband is *épris* of a pretty girl?

Mrs. De L. So I say. I always tell Mr. De Lancy he may flirt with as many pretty girls as he likes; but I should hate to have him go on with a

plain one, for everybody would say what a homely dud of a wife he must have if he can put up with a girl that looks like that?

Miss C. We all know you to be a philosopher, Mrs. De Lancy.

[Enter Mrs. Barton. She starts at seeing her husband, but recovers herself instantly. She kisses Mrs. De Lancy, and speaks to the others.]

Mrs. De L. Your husband said you were coming. I am delighted to see you. You never come nowadays to see your old friends.

Mr. B. (who has come forward with Miss Jameson) Yes, I was waiting for you to come in.

Mrs. B. I am glad to find you here, Miss Jameson. I want you to come home to dine with me.

Mr. P. (aside to Mrs. Crane) There, I call that beautifully done all round.

Mrs. C. It could n't be better.

Miss J. Thank you so much, but I have promised to dine with Alice.

Miss C. Yes, and I really cannot spare her, Mrs. Barton.

Mr. D. (aside to Mrs. Crane) The unflinching and instantaneous way in which she swore to that lie commands my highest respect.

Mrs. De L. Do sit down; it is just the middle of the afternoon.

Miss C. (rising in response to a glance from Miss Jameson) But we really must be going. I

had no idea it was so late. One always forgets about the time at your house, Mrs. De Lancy.

Mrs. De L. Oh, I wish one always could, I'd forget my time of life.

Miss C. That would be only returning the compliment to Time for so completely forgetting you.

Mrs. De L. Ha, ha, Alice! You are just as sharp and clever as you were in the days when I used to look up to you older girls in my school days.

Mr. D. (*aside to Mrs. Crane*) A Roland for an Oliver.

Mrs. C. (*aside to Mr. Danton*) We really must get out of this before it becomes a free fight.

Mrs. De L. (*kissing Miss Jameson and then Miss Corbet*) I am so glad you came, dears. Do come again soon. You know I am always at home Thursdays, and if you don't care for me you are sure to meet somebody or other who will entertain you.

[*Exeunt Miss Jameson and Miss Corbet.*]

Mrs. C. Don't you think those two girls are going off dreadfully? They used to be such a pretty pair.

Mrs. B. Miss Corbet is pretty still, don't you think; only I do think Miss Jameson makes up badly.

Mr. D. Good-bye, Mrs. De Lancy. Mrs. Crane

is going to set me down at the club. I must spare my aged frame, you know.

Mrs. De L. We are very sorry to spare it, I assure you.

[*There is the usual embracing and ceremony. Mrs. Crane is accompanied to the door by the hostess, and goes away with Mr. Danton.*]

Mrs. B. (*aside to her husband*) You had better come with me. It will look better.

Mr. B. Certainly, my dear; I intended to.

Mrs. De L. (*returning*) I wish dear Laura would not drive about so openly with Mr. Danton. People do talk so horribly.

Mrs. B. It is always so unpleasant to have any scandal connected with one's friends.

Mr. B. Or one's family.

Mrs. De L. Indeed it is. I think I should certainly die to be mixed up in a scandal. But one ought to be charitable; and especially people who are so united as you two are.

Mrs. B. Well, nobody can stop people from gossiping. They will invent the most injurious stories. I tell Dick we may wake up any morning to find the whole town ringing with some absurd story that we have separated, or eloped, or murdered each other, or anything else dreadful.

Mr. P. That would be a good joke! But really people know you both too well.

Mrs. De L. If anybody is safe from scandal, I should think you ought to be.

Mr. B. Oh, nobody is.

Mrs. B. Good-bye, my dear. Come and see me soon. And you, Mr. Pluton. You never come to see us.

[More leave-taking, and once more Mrs. De Lancy accompanies her guests to the drawing-room door. As she returns, she throws her hands up in a mock gesture.]

Mrs. De L. Who would believe that within forty-eight hours that man had started to elope with Amanda Jameson and been brought back by her brother?

Mr. P. Altogether, I think we had rather a lively and amusing afternoon. The way that cat, Alice Corbet, fought for her friend was something delicious. Alice is a bit skinny, but she's game to the backbone.

Mrs. De L. Really, Jack, you ought not to have outstayed them. People are talking awfully, and only yesterday I got a curtain lecture on your account.

Mr. P. I'm awfully sorry, my dear. Why don't you talk back? I'm sure you have chance enough.

Mrs. De L. Oh, I assure you, I was n't over meek; but after all you can't talk back to everybody; and Alice Corbet will repay everything that was said to her this afternoon with interest.

Mr. P. Let her. Who cares? What if people do talk? Besides, the Barton scrape will furnish

folk with enough to talk about for some time to come, so we may rest easy.

Mrs. De L. Perhaps it will. I'm sure I hope so. Shall I see you at the Fentons' to-night?

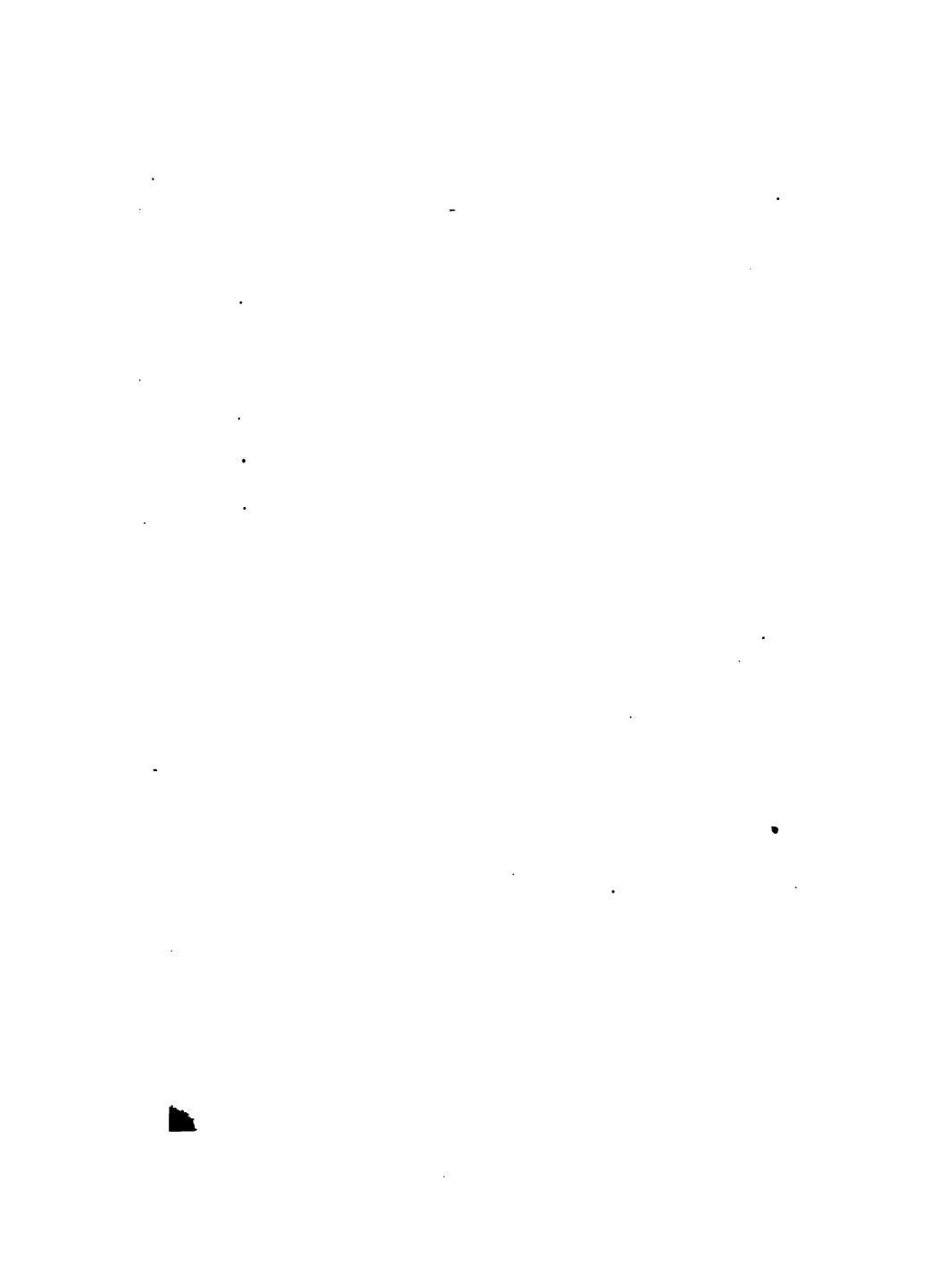
Mr. P. Yes, I shall look in about twelve. Good-bye.

[*They walk toward the door together, and this time Mrs. De Lancy accompanies her departing guest beyond the drawing-room door, the portière of which falls behind them.*]



Tale the Fifth.

THE TANJSAR TIGER.



THE TANJSAR TIGER.

Twas one night when we had been dining with Major Farwell that I heard the story. The Major was rather famous for collecting odd characters, and this time he had asked us to meet an old friend whom he had known in India, since the Major had travelled in India as well as everywhere else that civilized man does travel. He might well have been an Englishman, so great was his love of roving; and it is not improbable that this characteristic was the one which most endeared him to his numerous English friends, of whom the present visitor, Mr. Jason Tyne-Aryrt, was one.

The stranger was a strongly built, wholesome-looking man, forty-five or thereabouts, with a weather-beaten face and a keen eye, and a closely cut crop of iron gray hair. His hands, noticeably scarred, were also of noticeable strength, if appearance counted for anything, and his whole build indicated both

unusual power and unusual endurance. He was rather quiet during dinner ; but after the women had gone, and smoke and talk had pervaded the dining-room, he burst out rather suddenly and unexpectedly. A great gray cat had followed the servant into the room, and came to rub herself against the legs of the company, with the freedom and confidence of an established favorite.

“ My dear Farwell,” the Englishman cried, as soon as he caught sight of the animal, “ will you excuse me if I ask to have that beast put out? ”

The manner in which he said this indicated so much discomfort that everybody stopped talking, and stared at him while the host himself rose to eject pussy, without waiting for a servant.

“ I beg your pardon,” Mr. Tyne-Aryrt said, the color mounting into his swarthy cheek, “ but since that time in India, Major, I have n’t any control of myself where one of the cat tribe is concerned. I have to kill it or I must get away from it.”

The host nodded.

“ My dear fellow,” he said, “ don’t mention it, I beg ; I wonder that you ever had any nerve for anything after that. By the way, do you mind telling the gentlemen about the

scrape? It was the narrowest squeak of an escape I ever knew of, and they will all be interested."

The Englishman demurred, and said he did not intend to lead up to this; but of course we all insisted, and in the end he was induced to relate to us the following story. The Major, who had heard the tale from other sources, afterward vouched for its entire truthfulness; and indeed the character of the narrator would in itself have been sufficient to establish this.

"You see," he said, pushing up his sleeve so that his arm was bare almost to the elbow, "I am not without some evidences of what happened. My whole body is covered with scars such as these."

The scars crossed and recrossed one another in a perfect network, as if the skin had been scratched with a sharp-toothed rake.

"But surely a cat could not do that," Tom French said, as we looked in amazement at these singular cicatrices.

"That would depend upon the size of the cat," he returned with a smile. "I do not mind telling the story, although it is not a thing that it is very pleasant to recall. I've had times when I woke up in the night and remembered it with a sensation that made

my hair rise on my head. The cat that scratched me was the great Tanjsar man-eater, a tiger that you might have heard of in India ten years ago as the fiercest devil in that fiend-ridden country."

A murmur ran around our circle, and we involuntarily drew our chairs nearer to the narrator. He smiled faintly, perhaps a little amused at the effect that the mention of the tiger produced; and at the same time it was evident that he began to feel the stimulus of the attention which was instantly centred upon him.

"India has been a sort of second home to me," Mr. Tyne-Aryrt continued. "There is said to be a bit of Indian blood in my family, though whether this is a theory that grew out of the outlandish conclusion of my name or whether the name came from some Indian ancestor I am not prepared to say. We have the family history for a couple of hundred years without mention of him, though, so that this Indian ancestor must be pretty remote at least.

"I had hunted everything in India that there is to hunt, from the elephant down, but I had never killed a man-eater, and in an evil hour I decided to have a crack at the Tanjsar. The beast was a tigress that had kept

the whole region of Trakrata in terror for well on toward a dozen years, and the victims that had gone to feed her ladyship in that time were well up in the scores. The natives were so thoroughly afraid of her, and so completely convinced that she was inspired by a demon, that they could hardly be persuaded to defend themselves; and when it came to getting men to go with me, I found that it was all but impossible.

“ After an awful lot of bothering, and with the promise of an extravagant price, I found a couple of men, such as they were, and amid the cheerful predictions of all the inhabitants that I was but offering myself up as food for the man-eater, I set out on my quest. Before I returned, I had come to the place where I should have been glad to see my men eaten; but they came out of it safe, and to this day probably boast how they killed the Tanjsar tigress.

“ We had little trouble in coming on the track of the beast. The old lady had been dining on a mother and child in a little village half a day to the south, and was known to be still in the neighborhood looking out for more provisions of the same sort. We searched a couple of days without finding her, and then my men declared that she must

have left the locality. Some of the tracks that we had found were rather fresh, however, and I decided that we would look about one day more before we left the place.

"We had but a single tent, and were encumbered with as little luggage as possible. The third night we camped in a charming little grassy meadow, a couple of miles out of the village, one of the prettiest spots I ever saw in my life. There was a little brook, not quite dried up, running right through the middle of it, and half-a-dozen trees were scattered round before you came to the jungle, which began about an eighth of a mile from our tent. The night was as light as day, for the moon was full, and I sat until about ten o'clock in front of the tent smoking and admiring the view of a bit of mountain top that showed far off in the west through a break in the trees. When I turned in I gave particular directions to the men about watching, and tried the effect of a little scaring by adding that if they both got to sleep at once, the tiger was a demon and would know it. Heaven knows whether I was n't right too!

"It must have been near midnight when I woke, and in the second of waking dreamed that I was hunting and my elephant had fallen on me. I saw the exact spot where

the accident had happened, a place near the upper village of Koolighaddy where an elephant had stumbled with me once, and which I suppose stuck in my mind as a dangerous point. I even noticed how the cloths that are put on under the howdah had covered me so that I was wrapped up in them. It was curiously real and detailed, that dream; and yet it must have all been jammed into the fraction of a minute between the tiger's falling on me and my being awake enough to know what had happened. The beast had come up behind the tent, and leaped directly at it. The men were both asleep, of course, and very likely they would not have seen her if they had been awake. She had evidently made up her mind to have a little white blood that time, and the cunning beast was clever enough to know how to steal a march by a flank movement. The natives, you remember, believe that the intelligence of every man a tiger eats goes into the beast; and this man-eater, by that calculation, was as wise as at least a score of men,—unless the intelligence of some natives is to be counted as a negative quantity, like that of the two men I had.

"The tiger had jumped so that her body lay directly across my loins. If she had struck a little higher, she would either have

crushed the life out of me or at least knocked me insensible; and if she had struck a little lower, very likely she would have broken my legs. The canvas of the tent was between us, the whole thing having gone down under her weight, and through it I could hear her snuffing to discover just how her prey was placed. Then with one scratch of her tremendous paws, she ripped up the canvas so close to my head that I could feel the frayed ravellings against my cheek; and in less time than I have taken in telling you, she had me by the breast of my hunting-jacket, which I luckily had on, as the night was a bit coolish. She pulled me out through the slit in the canvas as you would pull a kitten out of a bag, rising so that I could slip out from under her body, and there I was in the full moonlight in the jaws of the Tanjsar man-eater."

The story-teller stopped to moisten his lips from the glass before him, but nobody spoke. We sat in breathless silence; and with a glance around the circle of intent faces, he went on again. It is no light thing to be face to face with a man who has been in the grasp of a man-eating tiger, and he could not but see that we were strongly affected by his story.

"The first thing I was conscious of see-

ing," the Englishman continued, "was those two infernal cowardly natives climbing a tree. I was so enraged that I forgot to be afraid, and the first sound I made was a command that I roared to them to come back and pick up their guns. Of course I might as well have yelled to the wind; and there I lay, helpless in that infernal beast's grip, and saw them scramble into the branches entirely unarmed, and of course as little able to aid me as if they had been a hundred miles away.

"Oddly enough, I was not afraid even then. The tiger had not hurt me beyond the fall of her soft body across me, which really had not injured me in the least. I was conscious of the intensely catty smell of her breath, and it may be that the modern theory that there is in the breath of these creatures a certain anæsthetic quality has some truth in it. At any rate, I was not in the least frightened, and my mind was perfectly tranquil. My arms were free, and in the single moment that the tiger paused after she had drawn me out of the tent, I managed to reach out and catch the muzzle of the gun which one of my men had flung down close to the tent as he ran.

"It may be that my movement startled

the beast, but at any rate she began to move toward the jungle. She went in the direction which the tent had faced, which indicated that she had made the half circle in the covert before showing herself. At first she stepped slowly, and I was able to slide my hand half-way down the barrel of my rifle; but then she began to run, and the stock caught in a turf of grass. I held on with all my force; but the tiger, evidently feeling the pull backward, gave a sudden spring forward, and the rifle was twitched out of my hand.

"My head and my heels were dragging, but fortunately the ground was soft, and beyond a scratching from the grass and the leaves of the weeds, I suffered no great injury. My mind ran over all possible means of escape. I tried to get at my pocket-knife, but when I succeeded in reaching my pocket, I found that everything had been shaken out as I had been dragged along. Then all of a sudden the tiger stopped, about half-way to the jungle, and dropped me on the grass. I lay perfectly still. Raising her great, handsome head,—she was a splendid devil to look at!—she began to call in a soft, purring way, the call of a cat for her kittens magnified a hundred diameters or so.

Ugh! The infernal beast! I never hear a cat call her kittens without its all coming back to me.

“She had hardly called a couple of times, before the cubs, two of them, came running out of the jungle, mewing and leaping toward her. As soon as they came to me, they began to snuff curiously; and I thought with a feeling of relief—that curious and illogical feeling of relief that comes in the midst of a thing that is not in the least finished, and of which the end is still hopeless—that they were not old enough to eat flesh. I was intended rather for their amusement and education than for their diet. They had been invited to examine me and to play with me, but the eating of me was probably to be reserved for the mother alone.

“The way in which the great cat went on with those cubs would have been very pretty to see had the danger not made it so frightful. She licked them with her great red tongue, purring over them and showing a maternal delight which was touching in its way, but not reassuring. She let them smell me all over, and then she began gently to stir me up a little for their amusement. With all her claws sheathed, she pushed me about

as if I had been a ball. It was a cat playing with a mouse, only that I refused to run. I knew that that meant being brought back with those cruel claws in my flesh; and for a while I kept my head. The cubs were not long in learning how they were expected to play with me; but they were not so careful as their mother had been to keep in their claws, and the result was that in five minutes after they began to toss me about I was scratched from my head to my feet, and smarting as if I had been stung by a thousand nettles. I endured it passively as long as I could, all the time endeavoring to edge away from the old mother, that lay and purred and blinked her great eyes in the moonlight, — the image of feline contentment. It occurred to me that if I could roll over as the cubs played with me, I might perhaps get back to where I dropped my gun, or at least reach one of the trees that stood about, and take my chance of scrambling up before the mother got to me."

"But what good," inquired one of the listeners, as the narrator paused an instant, "would it do you to climb a tree? Don't tigers climb?"

"It probably would n't have done me any good whatever," was the reply; "but I was in

a place where anything that looked like hope appealed to me. I thought I might break off a limb and beat the tiger back; or that I could induce one of my men to do something; or, in short," he added, smiling, "that a miracle might happen. However, I did not reach the tree, so that what would have happened if I had, does not matter. Suddenly one of the cubs gave me a scratch so cruel that I lost my head. I sat up and began to beat the beasts over the head. They whined and mewed and began to bite viciously; although as a matter of fact their biting was of less consequence than their scratching. My hunting-jacket was thick, and their teeth did not go through it, while their claws did. But the old she-devil of a mother heard them, and came to their rescue. I had presence of mind enough to lie down again and keep quiet, so that when she came to me she only smelled me, and gave me a poke or two with her paws. She licked her cubs affectionately, and crouched down by them while they began their sport again.

"At last she seemed to be infected with the spirit of their fun, and began to take a hand herself. Now and then as they rolled me toward her she would give me a playful toss which usually pretty well knocked the

breath out of my body, and bruised me black and blue. If you have ever seen a cat torment a mouse, you can imagin'e what happened to me. Perhaps I was stupefied by the breath of the beast,—for as I said a minute ago there is some sort of theory nowadays that the breath of all the cat family has anæsthetic qualities; or perhaps the truth was that I was so utterly without hope that I had given up my hold on life; but at any rate I was not conscious of being afraid, and I was even aware that I was somehow getting benumbed and dull. I shouted to the men in the trees directions to get my gun and fire, even if they should hit me; but they were too entirely overcome by fear to be able to do anything, and they simply sat and looked on while this ghastly play went forward, and I was being worried to death under their eyes. They probably said 'Kismet' in Eastern fashion, and held themselves relieved from all responsibility.

"Not to make too long a story of the affair,—although I assure you, gentlemen, that the time it lasted seemed long enough to me,—the tigress began to get more and more lively, and at last, without being conscious that I had any intention of doing it, I suddenly sprang to my feet and ran toward

the nearest tree, which was perhaps twenty feet away. I had gone a dozen feet when the tigress made an enormous bound, a sort of pleasant, amiable leap, which landed her just behind me; she seized the back of my coat without hurting me, and carried me back to her cubs. She was playful and purring, and evidently too sure of me to be angry that I tried to get away. The kittens fell upon me once more, and the mother joined in their innocent and playful fun.

"At last she threw me over her head, and as I came down behind her I caught hold of one of her hind legs. The act was instinctive, like my attempt to run away. It seemed as if I had somehow got beyond taking care of myself consciously, and some instinct had come to the rescue. I have always been remarkably strong in the arms, and I clung with a desperate grip. In the first astonishment, the animal swung around, so that I was whirled around a half-circle of seven or eight feet radius. Instantly, however, she stopped and bent her lithe body so that her splendid head, with its teeth showing white in the moonlight, came close to mine. Quick as a flash, and still acting without any conscious thought, I swung my head to the other side of her flanks, and at the

same time I bent her leg across my knee with all my force.

"I do not know," Mr. Tyne-Aryrt said, looking round the circle of eager faces with a smile, "whether you will believe me when I say that what I did was to break the leg of a living tigress, and a man-eater at that, across my knee; and yet that is literally what happened. I remember the savage strain I gave; all my force, all my anger, and all my instinctive thrill at the sudden hope of escape, combining to put force into me. I felt the bone snap, and instantly I sprang to my feet, caught one of the cubs by the head and flung it as high into the air as I could.

"The yell of rage and pain that that beast gave makes my flesh creep still when I remember it. She whirled about as I sprang backward, but sank down instantly on her broken leg. At the same instant the cub that I had thrown struck the earth with a terrible thud, and sent up a caterwaul that would have made your hair rise. The mother turned her head to see what had happened, and that gave me one little instant in which to get away from her. I ran toward the tent, and she followed. She could no longer spring, but on three legs she could run as

fast as I could go, and she was close at my heels when, by the mercy of Heaven, I stumbled over my gun. I don't know how I got that rifle into my hands right end first and fired it, but I did it somehow; and then I distinguished myself by dropping down in a dead faint.

"I have n't any idea how long I lay there. Those cowardly natives in the trees were afraid to come down even then; and when I came to, the pair of cubs were snuffing about their dead mother, whose nose was actually against my foot, so close to me had she fallen. I thought at first that I would keep the creatures alive, but they made me faint simply by their presence, and I told the men to shoot them both next morning. The men of Trankrata made something of a hero of me, as they are apt to do when a man has simply been forced to do something out of the common course to save his head. One of the grandees there sent me this ring."

There had been in all this discourse, which may seem unreal and cold when set down upon paper, a certain simplicity and frankness which were as convincing as they were persuasive. As the speaker ended, there was a deep-drawn sigh almost in unison from us

all, so deep had been our attention and our absorption in the tale. We sat for a moment in absolute silence, with our eyes fixed upon the Englishman. Then little Lieutenant Frith, who is excitable, swore a great mouth-filling oath under his breath. It was not the thing for a man to do in a company of gentlemen, but it did express our feelings pretty well.

The host rose without comment, and said: "Shall we rejoin the ladies?"

Then Fred Angos, who in his way is as excitable as the little Lieutenant, sprang up impulsively, and going to the Englishman, shook him heartily by the hand without saying a word. There was a quick murmur from the rest of us, which was equivalent to a unanimous endorsement of his act; then we went into the drawing-room and rejoined the ladies.

Interlude Fifth.



YES — AND NO.



YES — AND NO.

[Miss May Dayton, who has been cosily curled up in the corner of a comfortable sofa in her upstairs sitting-room, rises to welcome Mr. Frank Maynard, whose card has just been brought to her and whom she has allowed to come up as an especial favor.]

Mr. Maynard (coming forward with outstretched hand). So good of you to see me. You've been ill, I hear.

Miss Dayton. Yes.

Mr. M. (quickly) But you are better?

Miss D. (smiling bewitchingly and waving him to a seat in a big easy-chair, while she resumes her old position) Yes.

Mr. M. Do you know, I've been all but on the sick list myself?

Miss D. Yes?

Mr. M. I took an awful cold coming out from the Claytons' ball. Was n't the weather dreadful that night?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. And I had such a pain in my lungs —

Miss D. (sympathetically) Yes?

Mr. M. And my throat was so sore.

Miss D. (yet more sympathetically) Yes!

Mr. M. And I certainly thought I was in for pneumonia and all the rest of it. Cheerful, was n't it?

Miss D. (apparently not sure how much is jest and how much earnest) Yes.

Mr. M. However, I 'm all right now. Do you know, I think I 've got the biggest kind of a joke on Ned Stearns.

Miss D. (with animation) Yes !

Mr. M. You know how dreadfully smashed he 's been on Lily Sowdon ?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. Well, you know that tall cousin of hers that comes from Philadelphia to visit there ?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. Well, Ned asked Lily to go to the opera with him the other evening, and she wrote back that she was already engaged.

Miss D. Yes ?

Mr. M. And of course Ned went to the opera and spied about until he saw them, and —

Miss D. (greatly interested) Yes ?

Mr. M. And he saw her with this great tall fellow that he did n't know, and he got perfectly furious with jealousy.

Miss D. (leaning forward in the greatest interest, and absently putting a caramel into her mouth just because her eye fell on them when she was too absorbed to consider what she was doing) Yes !

Mr. M. And now he 's making no end of a row,

and wants me to go and demand his letters back.
Should n't you think he 'd do it himself?

Miss D. (with animation) Yes !

Mr. M. And all the time I know it was only
her cousin, and I won't tell him. Is n't that an
awfully good joke ?

Miss D. (doubtfully) Yes.

Mr. M. You don't seem very enthusiastic.
Don't you think Ned deserves a lesson for being
so unreasonable ?

Miss D. (more positively) Yes.

Mr. M. After all, women always admire a man
for being jealous. They think it shows that he is
really in love.

Miss D. Y-e-e-s?

Mr. M. Don't you know it is so ?

Miss D. (with a shrug) Yes ?

Mr. M. Come ; you are trying to tease me.
Should n't you want a man to be jealous who was
in love with you ?

*Miss D. (with a nod and a little gesture which
intimate that she holds very positive views on the
subject)* Yes.

Mr. M. (laughing triumphantly) There, I said
so. I knew you 'd take Ned Stearns's part ; now
don't you ?

*Miss D. (after a brief interval of silence, in
which she apparently tries in vain to decide to
what the admission commits her)* Yes.

Mr. M. Women are never logical. I suppose
you think their intuitions are above logic.

Miss D. (*quickly*) Yes.

Mr. M. Or below it.

Miss D. (*sarcastically*) Yes.

Mr. M. Oh, don't be offended ; you know I always agree with you, even if I know you are wrong. It is only polite to agree with a woman, I always say.

Miss D. Yes ?

Mr. M. There, now I've got you all cross again. I declare I don't know what I shall do to appease you. You are cross, are n't you ?

Miss D. (*smiling in spite of herself at his absurd manner*) Yes.

Mr. M. (*with a sigh of relief*) But not very, I think. I can always make girls forgive me when they are provoked.

Miss D. Yes ?

Mr. M. Why, Milly Mayle said the other day I talked so fast that nobody else could get in a single word. Now you know better than that, don't you ?

Miss D. Yes !

Mr. M. And she was just as cross as she could be because I would n't let her tell a story ; but I talked right ahead, and the first thing she knew she was laughing like anything. Don't you think she is a *genre* sort of a girl ?

Miss D. (*laughing*) Yes.

Mr. M. The sort of girl that ought to be in a kind of stage setting, and be composed in a picture, you know.

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. Now you are a different sort, altogether.

Miss D. Yes?

Mr. M. Oh, yes. You know Millie Mayle never really has anything to say that is worth hearing, and she is always interrupting one, trying to say it. Now, if you'll excuse me for saying it to your face, it is a pleasure to talk to you, you always have so much to say.

Miss D. (with a sweeping bow) Yes!

Mr. M. Oh, you may laugh, but truly I'd rather talk to you than to any other girl I know. The girls are so full of nonsense, and they all keep saying so many silly things that no sensible man can bear to talk with them. Don't you know, I've had a great notion of getting a lot of cards printed to send round as valentines, and the motto —

Miss D. Yes?

Mr. M. Was to be "Little folks should be seen and not heard." Don't you think that's an original idea?

Miss D. (dryly) Yes.

Mr. M. Oh, now you think I'm pitching into girls again, and you don't like it. Don't be cross, because, you see, I especially want you to be good-natured this afternoon. I came for a special reason.

Miss D. Yes?

Mr. M. I've been trying for a long time to get

up my courage. I am really awfully shy, and I 've always been shyer of you than of anybody else.

Miss D. (drawing back into the corner of the sofa and becoming colder with a premonition that something of importance is coming) Yes?

Mr. M. Yes ; I really have. I 've always liked you best of all the girls. I think we 've known each other long enough so we can be perfectly frank, don't you?

Miss D. (faintly) Yes.

Mr. M. (twirling his minute mustache in sudden confusion) I wish — that is, do you know, I 'm awfully fond of you.

Miss D. (in a tone perceptibly colder) Yes?

Mr. M. Why, of course. You must have known it. Have n't I always asked you first for the germans? You do dance so awfully well too.

Miss D. Yes. (*She folds her hands and looks into his face with an air of great innocence.*)

Mr. M. (moving uneasily in his chair) Of course you know it, and you must have seen what I meant by it.

Miss D. (laughing) Yes !

Mr. M. Oh, you think I asked you just because you dance so well. It was n't that ; at least that was only part of it.

Miss D. (with an air of candid but wholly impersonal interest) Yes?

Mr. M. Oh, Miss Dayton, I wish I were sure you 'd answer one question the way I want you to,

— but after all the best way to find out whether you will or not is to ask it, is n't it?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. I never was any good at making speeches. I always talk on in little scraps, and wait for other people to put in a word now and then when they want to —

Miss D. Yes?

Mr. M. It makes conversation so dull to have it all one way, don't you think?

Miss D. Yes?

Mr. M. But I wanted to ask you if you — (*He pauses and looks at her. She smiles reassuringly, and he continues as rapidly as ever.*) I wanted to ask you if you would n't marry me.

Miss D. (*very quietly*) No.

Mr. M. Do you mean it?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. Really?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. Why not? But then I don't suppose I've any right to ask that. I hope you are not offended? We can be friends still?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. I'm so sorry. You are sure you are in earnest?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. Then I suppose there is no good in urging you. I won't cry over spilt milk. Don't you think it is better to take things philosophically?

Miss D. (smiling and regarding him curiously)
Yes.

Mr. M. (rising) Well, that is off my mind, at any rate. I've been meaning to ask you all winter. You are sure you are not offended?

Miss D. Yes.

Mr. M. So many girls are put out, you know, when they won't have a fellow.

Miss D. Yes?

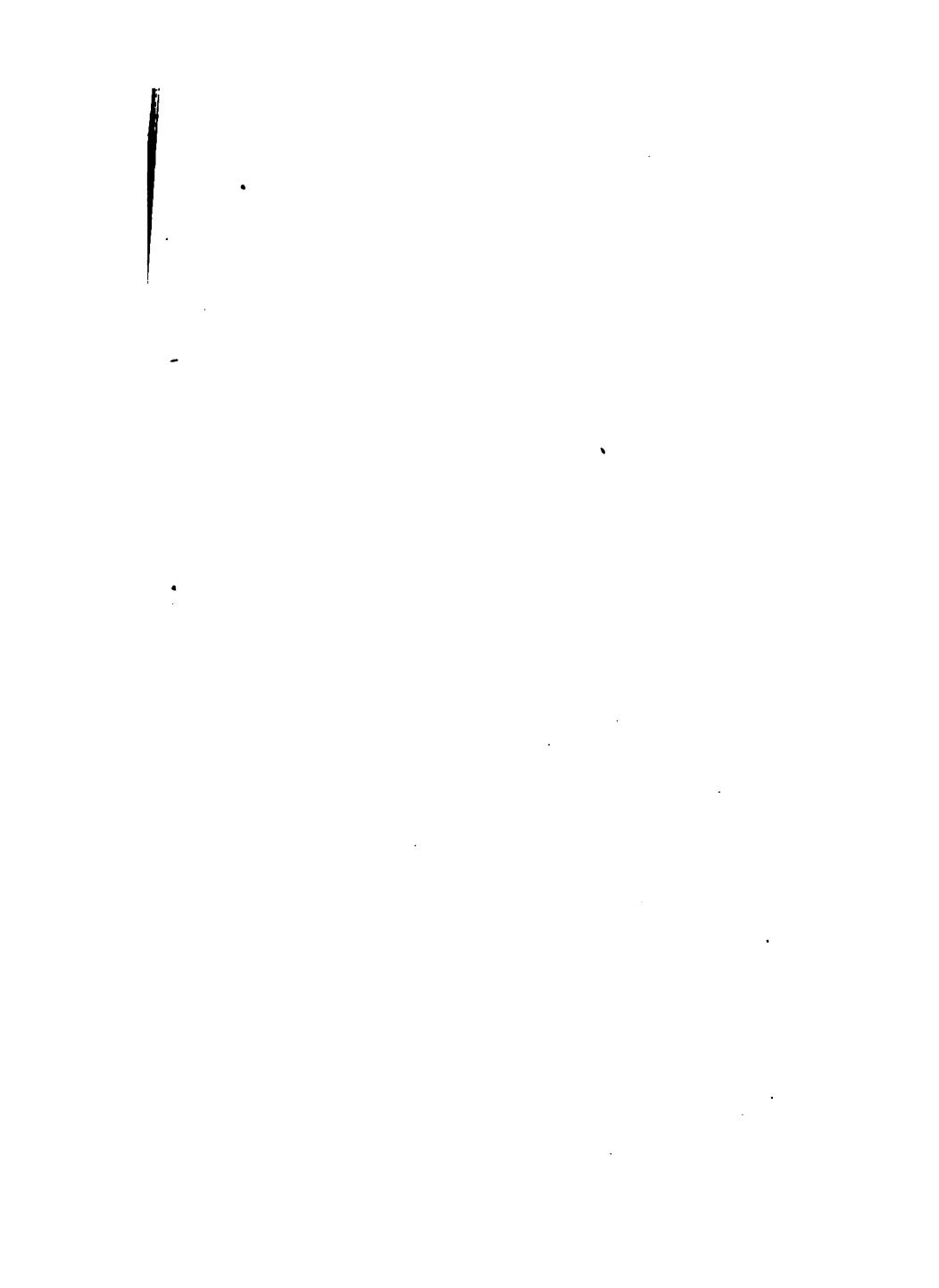
Mr. M. I had n't any idea it was so late. Really, I ought to have gone long ago. Good-bye. Don't bother to rise. Good-bye.

[And before Miss Dayton can even add a word of farewell he goes quickly away, apparently as brisk and blithe as ever.]

Tale the Birth.



THE CHAMBER OVER THE GATE.



THE CHAMBER OVER THE GATE.

Twas the one week in the year when the little old town seemed really possessed of life, and it was the day of that week when its life was at its fullest tide. Ever since the pink flushes above the tops of the hills had foretold the coming of morn the market-place had been astir, and the peasant-folk, the traders, the pleasure-seekers, and the pleasure-mongers had come pouring along the winding roads leading to the shut-in village which thus once in a twelvemonth blossomed out into the glory of its annual fair. All through the sunny hours had resounded the noise of traffic, the sound of bell and drum and bugle, and those rude viols which the vagabond gypsies from the South love to play upon. Laughter and song had mingled with the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle, the shrill cries of strange venders shouting their wares, and the loud-voiced boasts of the mountebanks calling to pleasure-seekers to enter their dingy tents and behold untold

and untellable wonders. The whining of beggars, the barking of dogs, the merriment or the wailing of children formed an undercurrent of sound; and through every street of the place, every nook of the valley where it stood, and even from the sides of the hills about it, the din resounded.

As the night fell, the uproar increased, although now there were not a few folk who were making their way with more or less ease and steadiness, as the case might be, along the ways which led them out of the valley toward their homes on the other side of the hills. Two travellers who were stemming the outgoing tide, and were descending the road which led from the south, smiled into each other's face as they approached and heard the riot more distinctly.

"We may be late, Adelbert," one of them said, "but it is evident that the fun is not over by any means."

"Certainly the noise is not," the other responded; "but let us hasten, for I am as hungry as the parish priest after a fast-day."

"I warrant that no parish priest was ever so hungry as I am," said the first speaker, laughing. "I could eat a slice off the Great Bear overhead if it were only toasted a little before a fire."

Adelbert smiled and glanced up at the stars; but he only quickened his steps by way of reply, and in a few moments more the pair stood at the arched gateway which led into the court of the inn of the village. For fifty and one weeks in the year the inn was as deserted and dead as a rock when the tide is out; but now it swarmed with life, and in answer to their request for lodgings the landlord laughed in their faces.

“By Saint Martin!” he said with tremendous swagger. “This is a pretty time in the week to be looking for lodgings. Every corner, even to the mouse-holes, has been full since Monday, and thou callest for rooms as coolly as if it were any other week in the year. Thou comest late to the Fair, friend.”

“We found other fair more attractive,” laughingly returned Egbert, who acted as speaker; “but now thou must needs give us a bed if thou turnest out of thine own. We are able to pay thee thine own price, and I warrant that that is large enough.”

The landlord was firm in his denial of any means of accommodating the two travellers, and they were about to leave the inn in the hope that some place might be found elsewhere in the village where they could get lodgings for the night, when the landlady,

who had come up during the conversation said to her husband in a half aside,—

“But there is the chamber over the gate.”

He turned and looked at her with a fierce glance; but as he did not in words rebuke her, she said to the strangers,—

“You would not mind lodging in the same room for one night, though it be narrow?”

“Nay,” Egbert answered. “We are twins, and have never yet been so far apart that we mind a single bed.”

“There be two beds,” she returned, thrusting backward with her elbow her husband, who was evidently minded to interfere. “Eat your supper and go out to see the Fair, if it please your worships. When you return all shall be in readiness for your sleeping.”

It was evident enough that there was here some mystery or other, but the matter did not seem of much importance in comparison with the fact that a chamber for the night had been secured. The brothers ate their supper in great content, and then followed the advice of the landlady by going out to see the Fair, which was still in full blast. The torchlights were flaring, the drums and pipes and strings and bells were sounding, voices of all keys and all tones were babbling and calling and laughing, while the throngs of

merrymakers swarmed to and fro like ants in a hill. The brothers went aimlessly from tent to tent and from booth to booth, jesting and examining everything, laughing at the mummers and the puppet-shows, the snake-charmers and the jugglers, with the infinite good-humor of youth, until at last the fatigue of their tramp over the hills to the town, added to that of the Fair, made them turn their thoughts to the inn and to their resting-place for the night.

“Come,” Adelbert said; “the best of the fun is over, and I am tired. Let us go and see what sort of a hole may be this chamber over the gate into which we are to be thrust to sleep.”

“It cannot be much,” Egbert responded, “or it would have been filled already. Hallo! Here, in good sooth, is a witch. Let us have our fortunes told before we go.”

The booth before which he paused was a sort of rude tent fashioned of dingy stuff, and lighted by a torch which had already burned down almost to its socket. The fortune-teller was an old hag with shining eyes, who sat crouched upon the ground and called out to the passers to come and hear all the secrets of fate.

“Come hither, handsome signors,” she cried

to the brothers. "Here you shall learn all your fortune. Here you may discover if your mistresses love you, and if they will grant your suits. Cross your palms to me, brave signors; all the secrets of fortune are mine."

Both the brothers hesitated, and each glanced at the other as if had he been alone the witch would not have called in vain, but as if there were that to be told which he would not have heard by his fellow.

"Oh, come thy way, Egbert," Adelbert said. "Who hath faith in these soothsayers sitting in the streets? Let us to the inn, and to bed."

The other moved on as he was bidden, albeit somewhat lingeringly.

"We may dream out our fortunes in this mysterious chamber over the gate," he said with a light laugh.

"Ay," cried the witch, overhearing his words. "Go thy ways to the chamber over the gate, and read the future in the mirror of thoughts."

There was so bitter a scoff in her tones that both the brothers turned to look at her, and in looking back they made a wrong turning, so that in another moment they found themselves in a labyrinth of tents and booths, unable to see their way out of it,

and ignorant in which direction lay the inn for which they were bound.

“Stay,” Egbert cried, after they had turned and twisted in half-a-dozen directions; “we must needs ask guidance. Aha; here in the nick of time is the waiter who served us at supper.”

It was indeed the inn waiter who stood before them, and although he had evidently been celebrating the Fair with deeper potations than were consistent with much steadiness of gait, he was still able to guide them. As he went, moreover, he waxed loquacious and seemed disposed to become extremely confidential.

“And ye are to lodge in the chamber over the gate,” he said at last, nodding his head with drunken gravity. “I wonder, now, will it be one of you or both?”

“What dost thou mean?” demanded Adelbert.

The man looked at him with a cunning leer, shaking his big head; but he did not reply to the question directly.

“I warrant now,” he said, “that the mistress made you to pay the reckoning in advance, did she not? She is a shrewd baggage. And she had promised the priest that the place should not be slept in this year. There was over-much coil last Fair-time.”

"What happened last Fair-time?" asked Egbert, laying a detaining hand on the man's arm, for they were now close to the inn gate.

"It is always the same," the man said. "It was the same that always happens when there are lodgers in the chamber over the gate."

"What nonsense is the man telling you?" struck in the gruff voice of the landlord, who at this instant appeared in the gateway. "It is a good lodging. Would the worshipful gentlemen sleep in the streets?"

He held up the torch he carried, bestowing upon the serving-man a glance so angry that the varlet shrank away ashamed, without even waiting for the coin which Egbert would have bestowed upon him for his service as a guide.

"Come this way, my masters," the landlord said, turning to a narrow doorway which opened in the side of the arch which covered the entrance to the inn courtyard, and leading his guests up a crooked and contracted stairway which burrowed its way upward in the solid wall.

The chamber into which he conducted them was a small square room with two strait windows looking down into the courtyard of the inn, and a single narrow opening opposite, through which one might have shot an

arquebus at an enemy approaching from the street without. The place was scantily furnished; a couple of truckle-beds stood over against the two windows, a couple of stools and a shabby table were placed against the walls, while a dingy mirror of greenish glass, set in a tarnished frame, hung between the windows.

"Good sooth, this is not a palatial apartment," Egbert said, laughing. "Never have I been in so strait quarters before."

"The street would be quarters wider," the host returned grimly; "but on the whole the cheer is better here than there."

Such as it was there was evidently nothing to be done but to make the best of things; and when the landlord had lighted their rush candle and betaken himself off, the brothers got speedily to bed. The noises in the village had largely died away, the bustle in the inn itself had subsided, and the twins lay there in silence and a darkness which was lessened only by a ray of light from a lantern set upon a post before the inn, which strangely struck through the narrow slit in the outer wall of the chamber, and fell upon the old tarnished mirror opposite. For a space they were quiet, but at length Adelbert said softly,—

“Art thou awake, Egbert?”

“Yea,” the other answered. “I am not drowsy, but I thought that thou wert asleep.”

For a moment Adelbert made no reply. Then he burst out suddenly.

“Egbert,” he demanded, with a trace of fierceness in his tone, “what said the Lady Adelaide to thee this morning there by the mulberry-trees?”

“Perchance,” retorted his brother with sudden bitterness, “if I tell thee, thou wilt say to me in return what thou wast whispering to her when I came upon thee in the pleasure yester even!”

“Naught that she was loath to hear,” cried Adelbert angrily.

“Good sooth,” sneered Egbert, “I would not be sure that thou wouldest not have been loath to hear what she said to me by the mulberry-trees!”

Adelbert started as if to spring up in bed, but controlled himself and lay down again. He was stretched out upon his side facing the opposite wall of the room, and his eyes were irresistibly attracted by the gleam of light reflected upon the old mirror which hung between the windows. For a long time there was silence in the chamber, while Adelbert continued to stare at the mirror,

thinking angrily of his brother and of the Lady Adelaide. Suddenly it seemed to him that there was a movement in the dull surface of the mirror. There was an appearance of rolling clouds, as if masses of luminous vapor welled up continually from the centre and spread onward toward the edges of the glass. He watched it idly, thinking of it only as of some effect upon his tired eyes, coming from looking too long, until he became aware that the surface of the whole mirror had cleared, and that in it he could see reflected the chamber with his brother and himself lying in the two beds. He wondered at the clearness of the reflection in a room so dimly lighted; but before this wonder could fully shape itself in his mind it gave way to another. He seemed in the mirror to see the reflection of himself slowly and stealthily rising from the bed. Involuntarily he glanced toward Egbert, but in his dim corner he was lying quiet. Without himself moving, Adelbert saw his shadowy semblance in the mirror steal from its place with a caution which was in itself a confession of evil intent; he saw it stoop to the stool whereon lay his clothing, and take from its belt the dagger. Cold sweat of fear broke out upon Adelbert's forehead as he lay there and saw his double

glance toward the sleeping Egbert with the murderous fury of a foiled rival in his eyes. He gasped, clenching his hands so tightly that the nails cut into the palms; he said to himself that he was dreaming, and yet he knew that he was fully awake. He felt as if the dreadful picture on the mirror was painted so plain that all the world might see, and he dared not stir lest his brother wake and behold it. He grew hot with shame and then cold with fear as he saw pictured before him his own self creeping across the chamber with the stealthy glide of a midnight assassin, the dagger clutched with ready hand to strike the sleeper; and with it all he felt as if ten thousand demons were urging him to do this very thing which he saw enacted before him. Hardly could he restrain himself from stealthily gliding out of his bed to seize his dagger and creep toward the couch of Egbert as he saw his shadow doing in the glass.

Moreover it seemed to him that this was nothing new, but as if it were in some way the reproduction of something which was already familiar to him. This way of clearing his pathway to the love of the Lady Adelaide —

With a sudden horror it flashed upon him

that it was from the wicked depth of his own mind that this dreadful vision had come. He groaned aloud with horrible self-loathing and remorse.

“It is the mirror of thoughts,” he murmured, unconsciously speaking aloud.

At the word Egbert sprang up in his bed.

“It is false! It is false!” he cried out furiously. “I never thought to murder thee in thy sleep! The mirror lies!”

“What!” cried Adelbert, springing up in his turn. “Didst thou see it also?”

“I saw a lie!” Egbert returned in a voice of rage. “It is an accursed witchery. If thou hast seen a vision of me, it is a wile of that witch in the market-place.”

“A vision of thee?” echoed Adelbert, stupefied.

“What hast thou seen?” demanded Egbert, sitting up in bed and leaning forward in the semi-darkness as if in a vain attempt to read the face of his brother. “Thou didst cry out that ‘it is the mirror of thoughts.’”

“I saw—I saw nothing,” Adelbert answered stumblingly. “Nothing but some idle imagining; that is, something which perchance I dreamed.”

He was overcome by the discovery that the vision in the mirror had been seen by his

brother, but with a change of actors, and that to each the mirror had evidently offered the picture of himself playing the assassin.

"Yes," Egbert assented eagerly; "doubtless thou hast been dreaming. I saw that thou wert asleep."

Adelbert was too much overcome to reply to this, and once more silence fell in the chamber over the gate. The quick breathing of the brothers sounded loud and hollow, and Adelbert felt his heart beating hotly against his breast. He was too confused to think clearly, and little by little, despite the excitement of the feelings which the vision in the mirror had awakened, sleep overcame him. He fell into a slumber which was broken by startings and half awakenings, in which he seemed still to see his own shape creeping snake-like across the room to plunge the dagger in the heart of his brother.

Suddenly, with a cry of terror, he awoke and sprang up. The dream had become a reality, and Egbert stood over his bed, his dagger clinched in his extended hand. The instinct of self-preservation is strong and quick, and almost before he had seen his danger Adelbert had grasped the wrist of the brother who would have been his assassin.

"Egbert!" he cried. "In the name of God, what art thou doing?"

"What thou wouldest do if thou wert a man!" Egbert cried back fiercely. "I am ridding myself of him who would steal away my lady."

There was a breathless struggle in the darkened chamber, brother fighting against brother in a mad contest for life or death. Adelbert was the more quick and pliant, but Egbert was the stronger of the twins, and when to strength was added a weapon, the issue of the combat seemed not to be doubtful. Adelbert felt his strength failing, and through his mind there rushed humiliating recollections of the many times his brother had beaten him in playful struggles for mastery. He remembered the torch-ring in the wall of the castle hall which he had been used to clutch as a boy to prevent his brother from throwing him to the ground; and he seemed to hear again the mocking, triumphant laugh with which Egbert would always in the end wrench him from his hold and fling him down upon the rush-strewn floor. Even in the midst of this struggle for life Adelbert could remember how the rushes always slipped under him as he fell at last. He could see the face of his mother

looking over the gallery above, which she could reach from the chamber where she sat at embroidery with her maidens by passing through the oratory, and whence she was wont to keep an eye to the doings of her wild lads in the hall beneath.

“For the sake of our dead mother, Egbert,” Adelbert cried out, with her face so vividly before him that a vision could not have been clearer.

For reply Egbert lifted his strong knee and set it against his brother’s chest, straining to get free the hand which held the dagger. Adelbert felt a shuddering sense of failure, of being again conquered, and with it there came a sense that to the victor belonged the Lady Adelaide. A wave of self-contempt swept over him that he was not able to vanquish Egbert even when she was the prize. With a last despairing effort he threw all his force into a frenzied onslaught, straining every sinew till he felt the blood stinging his temples as if it would burst through. In the fury of the thrust he flung the right arm of Egbert backward with a wrench so vicious and so sudden that the dagger was torn from the hand which held it and sent flying across the chamber. It flew full into the midst of the weird mirror, and

splintered the glass into a thousand slivers which flashed in the light with sudden radiance and then went out in blackness, leaving the room almost totally dark now that it was deprived of the reflection of the lantern without.

At the crash, as if it were the breaking of some spell which the mirror had cast over them, the brothers stood still, panting and yet clutching each other with the murderous grasp of men who fight for their lives. It was too dark for them to see the faces each of his brother, but they were so closely locked that the hot breath of Egbert burned Adelbert's cheek.

“For the love of God, Egbert,” he panted, “why wouldst thou slay me?”

He felt the strong frame of his brother quiver, and then suddenly the head of Egbert was bowed to Adelbert's shoulder, and both were sobbing like children. They wound their arms about each other as they had done when childish quarrels were made up, and the hot tears of remorse and reconciliation washed away the bitterness of the strife. They sat down, hand in hand, upon the edge of the truckle-bed and were silent, each struggling with his thoughts.

“Egbert,” Adelbert said hesitatingly, at

length, "dost thou think that the Lady Ade-
laide loves thee?"

"I know not," Egbert answered. "All
that she hath told me —"

"Well?" the other said, as he hesitated.

"She told me there by the mulberry-
trees," Egbert went on, pressing his brother's
hand as if he asked pardon for the words,
"that she could not love thee; but I mis-
trusted that she trifled with me."

"Now, by Our Lady Mary!" cried out
Adelbert, "she hath played us both false.
In good sooth, what she said to me in the
pleasance was that she could never love
thee! It is as we have thought, and she doth
but amuse herself with us twain, while her heart
is given to that cunning knave, Godmar."

A conviction born of old knowledge and
misgivings seemed to take hold upon them
both.

"Yet I would have killed thee for her
sake!" murmured Egbert.

He threw his arms about Adelbert and
kissed him on the cheek. Then, as if
ashamed of this last display of boyishness,
he rose brusquely.

"By the True Cross," he said with the air
of one who has never known emotion, "this
is a mad time of the night to be talking.
Get thee to bed, madcap."

Then, after both were in bed and had lain a long time in wakeful silence, Egbert spoke once more.

“Dost thou think,” he asked somewhat hesitatingly, “that the foul mirror which we have broken hath done men to death here in this chamber with its hellish visions?”

“In good sooth, I know not,” Adelbert answered; “but us it hath reconciled.”

“Yea,” was the reply, “but not until we had shattered it.”



Interlude Sixth.



A LESSON IN NATURAL HISTORY.

A LESSON IN NATURAL HISTORY.

She (standing with drooping head, and busily poking a hole in the sand with the point of her sun-shade). Of course, you are right. I have never known an instance in which you were not.

He (regarding her with a little concern, but apparently with more curiosity). Now you are angry.

She. Have I no cause to be, Captain Kane ?

He. You must have.

She. I must have ?

He. Of course ; else you would not be angry.

She. Oh, now you are sarcastic.

He. If I had disagreed with you, you would have been equally displeased.

She. You are determined to be disagreeable !

He. On the contrary, I am anxious to be agreeable if I only could hit upon the way in which it could be come at.

She. Indeed ! And to think how little one might have suspected that !

He (flinging himself on the sand at her feet). You do not mind if I lie down, I trust ?

She. By all means make yourself comfortable.

He. Thank you.

[*She looks at him doubtfully for a moment, and then moving away a little, but not so far as to be out of ear-shot, she seats herself upon the end of a wave-washed log.*]

He. I should think that that seat would be damp.

She. It is no matter.

He. If you do not mind, certainly it is not.

She. You might have found me a better seat.

He (*rising with elaborate courtesy, and bowing toward the seat on the sand which he has occupied*). You will, perhaps, condescend to try the place which I had?

She. Thank you, but I prefer to remain where I am.

He (*flinging himself down again*). As you please.

[*There is a short silence, during which she becomes more and more solemn, while he assumes an eminently cheerful expression of countenance. She looks out over the sea, while he regards her, idly twisting his cane in his hands.*]

He. I think I promised to give you a lesson in natural history to-day, did I not?

She. Very likely; but I should n't think of troubling you.

He. Oh, it is no trouble, I assure you. I have nothing else in the world to do.

She. It is a pity you have nothing to do. I never could respect an idle man.

He. And so I proposed to become a busy one by giving you the instruction aforesaid.

She. That would indeed be something.

He. Not much, it is true ; but still something.

She. Very well ; if you are determined to undertake my education, you had perhaps better begin.

He. Good. It will perhaps be best that I examine you a little at the outset, in order that I may discover how much you know. I shall have to question you.

She. Is that part of the bargain ?

He. There is no bargain, so far as I know. You said that you wished to know more of natural history, and I offered to instruct you. Now, the field of natural history is a wide one ; it is probable that there are some divisions of the subject which would be more attractive to you than others, and it is also probable that you are better prepared for some than for others. In order to discover what is the best thing to begin upon, it is necessary that I discover what you know in this department already. I trust that I make myself clear.

She. Oh, perfectly.

He. And of course you are ready to answer the questions I ask ?

She. That will depend upon what they are.

He. You mean upon whether you can answer them or not.

She. Not at all.

He. What then?

She. Upon whether I wish to answer them or not.

He. That is hardly a satisfactory attitude for a learner.

She. But it is necessary with such a teacher.

He. Thank you. It is hardly worth while to go on after that.

She. As you please. What had you thought of beginning upon?

He. We might have had an instructive lesson upon the nature of the female of man.

She. If the truth was to be told, I cannot but regret that for your own sake you did not go on. It is hardly possible that you could fail to get a new respect for the sex if you only studied it carefully.

He. Do you know, it seems to me sometimes that you women are more profoundly ignorant in regard to yourselves than any other animals extant.

She. Taking as the standard, of course, the things which you men suppose to be true in regard to us.

He. Of course. We are disinterested observers, and can tell what the truth is.

She. Disinterested!

He. Why not?

She. You do not, of course, try to make things square themselves to your theories.

He. Our theories are only formulated facts.

She. And to what conclusions have your formulated facts — admirable phrase! — led you?

He. That women are the most selfish, the most inconsistent, the most —

She. Really, it is not worth while to go on. That sort of abuse is at once too trite and too cheap to be worthy of the eloquent lips of Captain Kane. It was you, was it not, whom Mrs. Petrinell was pleased the other day to call the most courteous gentleman of the time?

He. Mrs. Petrinell is a fulsome old harridan!

She. She would be pleased to hear you say so. It would dawn on her for the first time that the most courteous gentleman of his time could lose his temper, and scold a woman like a fishwife.

He. Does it not seem to you that the conversation has become a trifle too personal to be wholly well-bred?

She. It is possible that that construction might be put upon it by some. Mrs. Petrinell, for instance, might incline to that view.

He. What is the reason, Helen, that you take so much delight in teasing me? I never lose my temper with any other woman in the world.

She. That is conclusive proof that we should never be together.

He. You forget that I am a homeopathist, and believe —

She. In small doses.

He. Don't interrupt. It is rude. And believe that like cures like.

She. That means that if I like you it will cure your liking for me.

He. Nonsense! It means nothing of the sort.

She. Oh, that is not a peculiarity of yours; it is common to the whole sex. I could perhaps give you a lesson in the nature and attributes of the male of the human race with profit to you. It would be necessary to begin, it is true, by asking you questions.

He. I could at least be patient in answering them, if I undertook it; which is more than could be said of some.

She. Don't be too modest. Say which is more than can be said of most of your sex.

He. I was thinking of yours.

She. It is a fault of your character, if you will pardon my mentioning it, to think too much of our sex.

He. I am aware that the subject is one which it is demoralizing to take too seriously.

She. Thank you. Is this natural history?

He. It has become so uncertain who is to take the part of instructor in the lesson that the whole scheme of instruction has been overthrown.

She. Which is such a pity!

He. It is certainly not my fault.

She. Nothing can be a man's fault as long as there is a woman alive.

He. Very likely you are right !

She. Does this seem to you a very intelligent or edifying conversation ?

He. On the contrary, it seems to me utterly inane.

She. Then it would perhaps be better if you would go on with that famous discourse on natural history which you were anxious to give me.

He. The animal kingdom is headed by a biped which is gifted with peculiar limitations which distinguish it from the monkey tribe. It is unprotected from the cold by any natural clothing ; it is unable to subsist upon raw food ; it is neither endowed with strength to withstand the attacks of the other animals nor able to climb to escape them as do the simians, and in a word it is in most respects inferior to those species from which it is supposed to have descended.

She. Oh, most admirable philosopher !

He. The female of the species is capricious, vain, and wholly unreliable.

She. "A second Daniel come to judgment !"

He. Her strongest characteristic is the love of finery, although in some specimens the love of deceit and of cruelty seems to overmaster even this.

She. Do you know, Captain Kane, it has often seemed to me that the strangest thing about men is the way in which they take to abuse of our sex the moment anything in the world goes against

their wishes. If the wind blows in the wrong direction, it is always upon women that chivalrous man throws the blame. Adam is said to have begun it when he laid the blame of the fall upon Eve. For my part, I have no doubt whatever that he sent the serpent to tempt her, so that he might have an excuse for eating the apples without taking the blame.

He. As if that were necessary !

She. You may be sure that he would sneak the blame on to woman somehow.

He. At this stage of human history nothing seems to me more stupid than the heaping of reproaches upon the sexes.

She. I am so sorry to have begun it !

He. Yes ; it is a pity that you did.

She. You impudent wretch ! You know that I did nothing of the sort !

He. But you would have, if you had had a chance.

She. That is masculine fairness !

He. Well, I am ready to forgive you.

She. That is more than I can say.

He. Oh, if you are not ready to forgive yourself, I cannot help that.

She (rising). I think it is time for me to go back to the hotel.

He. Oh, don't hurry. Your conversation is of a sort —

She (suddenly losing her self-control). Captain Kane, I will never speak to you again !

He. And why not, pray?

She. You are never tired of vexing me ; and I think you are too cruel !

He. Really, Miss Wheatland, I —

She. Oh, don't deny it. Of course it is foolish of me to mind ; but —

He. I give you my word that it never occurred to me that you cared for all this silly talk. I did not think there was point enough to my badinage to wound you.

She (recovering herself). That is just it. It is not keen enough to pierce without being felt. It only bruises.

He. You are evidently on the way to forgiving me when you return to abuse !

She. Not that you deserve to be forgiven, but —

He. But you know that I am at heart your devoted slave.

She. No, that I had not suspected.

He. It is true nevertheless. I am yours to dispose of at your will.

She. Then suppose that I suggest that you should start on an exploring expedition to the South Pole.

He. With all my heart ; if you will come too.

She. Come ; you are improving. I have never before heard so gallant a speech from your lips.

He. There is no telling what you can make of me if you will really take me in hand.

She. But —

He. There is no but about it. I intended to add to my remarks on the race of beings upon which I began to lecture, that great and noble as the man is, he is nothing unless he is taken in hand by the female of his sex and trained.

She. The theory does you infinite credit; but suppose I reply that the training of some individuals of the species is so difficult that no sane woman would think of undertaking it.

He. That is all very well in theory. In practice it is the duty of women to take pity upon the most hopeless cases which present themselves. The glory is the greater if the men they labor upon are apparently hopeless.

She. Upon that theory I have certainly no choice but to take you, Captain Kane.

He. It is a bargain then?

She. I suppose so.

He. Thank you.

She. But I did not give you leave to kiss me like that.

He. It is a fact of natural history which I neglected to mention, that the masculine biped aforesaid manifests affection, gratitude, and stronger sentiments by pressing his lips to those of the female of his species: as thus!

She. It is highly improper of him; and yet —

He. And yet?

She. And yet not wholly unpleasant!

Tale the Seventh.



ONE CLASS-DAY.



ONE CLASS-DAY.

“ IS amid roses that the bee stings,” runs the Hindu song; and in the same mood the Persian poet wrote, “Joy is the sheath of sorrow.” Pretty Kitty Lawrence, sitting in the window-seat of Jack Talbot’s room in Holworthy, and looking out over the gay picture of fresh young faces and still fresher gowns which make up the glory of a Harvard Class-Day, did not know these quotations, but she was none the less exemplifying the spirit which animates them. She had been so perfectly, so securely happy half an hour ago; she had settled herself so joyously amid her crisp white draperies, drawing the window-curtain before her as a sign that she wished to be let alone while she rested and waited for Harry Clisby to send the escort he had promised to take her to the tree. Harry himself was class-marshall, and had so much on his hands that it was really wonderful that he had been able to devote so much of his day to Miss Kitty as he had already

given her,— a reflection which had been in her mind when the gossip on the other side of the window-curtain had suddenly come to her ears, and stabbed her with venomous thrust.

It had been such a delightful day thus far. Kitty thought she had never seen a morning more perfect, when the sunshine was so bright and so soft and so warm, yet neither scorching nor glaring; when the air was so fresh and invigorating, the trees so green, the flowers so fair; and never, moreover, although this was by no means her first class-day, had her dress been more perfectly satisfactory, more tractable in the carriage, or more good-natured about retaining its freshness as the day wore on.

And then there was that magnificent bunch of jacqueminots which Harry had not forgotten to send her, and which was beginning to droop at her belt at this moment; and above all there was Harry himself. He had somehow contrived to be on hand when the carriage drove up, looking handsomer than ever, and he had been so kind and attentive. He had been more than that, for he had found the opportunity in the shade of a big camphor palm, which in a clumsy green tub was one of the decorations of the Gymnasium, where half-a-dozen men, of whom he was

one, gave the most dashing spread of the day, to put the all-important question toward which he and Kitty had been gravitating all winter. She flushed with exquisite pleasure, sitting in Jack Talbot's window-seat, at the remembrance, and too with a shy, maidenly shame at the kiss she had granted him in token of the love she could not find words to express.

But all this was half an hour ago, and now she sat still in the shadow of the curtains, so thoroughly miserable that she could hardly seem to herself ever to have been happy. She had come over to Jack Talbot's spread ; and Jack, who was her cousin, had tucked her away in this window-seat to be comfortable and rest, and then she had heard that dreadful talk which was destined to change the whole course of her life.

The speakers were the wife of an ex-Governor, a short, stout, hard-featured woman whom Kitty had always detested, a woman one might have selected from her appearance to be concerned in such bitter gossip ; and a milky-faced girl for whom Miss Lawrence had if possible even less fondness. The two had seated themselves close beside Kitty's window, seeing indeed that somebody was there, but not noticing who it was, so well was the occupant of the window-seat screened by the draperies ;

and in their talk they were perfectly without care whether they were overheard.

"He is class-marshal," were the words which arrested Kitty's attention.

"Is he?" the younger lady asked, in that tone which so unpleasantly suggests that some racy scandal is under discussion. "Is he that awfully handsome fellow?"

"Yes," returned the ex-Governor's wife, who imparted all information with an air which her dearest friends, most of whom heartily detested her, were accustomed to call official,—"yes, that's he."

"Is it really?" twittered the other. "And is he a truly genuine Mormon?"

"The real article, I assure you. His father is one of the pillars of the church, an apostle or an elder or something. The Governor met him when he was in Salt Lake City. He is very rich, and has seven wives."

"Seven wives?" echoed the other in a tone of almost ecstatic delight at so perfectly disreputable a state of things. "You don't mean it! And this handsome fellow really has seven mothers!"

"I'm sure I don't know whether he calls them all mothers or not," the ex-Governor's lady returned with her acid tone. "They are all his father's wives or — something worse."

"And his own mother," pursued the younger, who found the subject full of a most novel attractiveness,—"was she the first wife?"

"No, she wasn't; that's the worst of it. The Governor inquired about that because Mr. Clisby had been at our house,—Mr. Talbot brought him, you know, and he went everywhere last winter,—and he found that his mother was the third wife. If she'd been the second, it would not have seemed quite so bad somehow; but the third!"

Kitty could feel the ex-Governor's wife settle her stout person back in her chair, and she knew as if she saw it the expression which the face of that lady wore,—the look of one who would seem to say, "I have expressed all that a virtuous woman could venture to put into words on such a delicate subject." The young lady to whom the elderly gossip was talking gave a little gasping murmur.

"Then," she said in a voice of mingled delight at the sensationalism of the situation and of affected horror,—"then he is n't legitimate."

"No," the other returned, with the placidity of satisfied virulence; "oh, of course he is not."

"And I danced with him only last week at

the Trennis' lawn-party! Any way, I met him at the Lawrences' and the Talbots'. What is a Mormon here for, anyway?"

"It does seem strange, does n't it; but there have been several of the sons of wealthy Mormons in Harvard."

It seemed to poor Kitty as if the discussion between the gossips was likely to go on interminably, but at this point it was interrupted by the arrival of a friend who came to escort the talkers to the tree; and a moment later, Kitty heard her name called, and put aside the curtain to see Tom Crowninshield standing in the narrow doorway.

"Jack told me where to find you," he said. "It's time to join the mob, if we are to get any sort of seats."

She rose slowly from her place, looking so grave and pale that Tom regarded her in surprise and concern.

"Goodness!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter with you? You are as white as your dress."

"It's my head," Kitty returned feebly, too stunned even to be able to manufacture an original excuse. "I got Jack to hide me because I had a headache, and I thought I should be better by this time."

"Do you want to go to the tree, anyway?" demanded Tom, feeling rather helpless.

"Oh, yes," she answered quickly. "I shall be better in the open air, I dare say; and at any rate I 'm plucky."

He answered with a glance of frank admiration.

"I'll tell you," he said, "we 'll go into my room as we go along, and I can give you some iced soda-water. Perhaps that 'll make you feel better."

If he had proposed anything else, it would have been quite the same thing; Kitty would have accepted any suggestion which gave color to her excuse of illness, and which might help her to rally her self-possession for the ordeal of the afternoon. She would not have missed those Class-Day ceremonies for worlds. She sat up straight and brave among her mates, with gayly chattering girl-friends all about her, and forced herself to play her part with as joyous a seeming as that of any of them all. She saw the classes of alumni come filing in to take their seats upon the grass, and with laughing face watched all that complicated readjustment and reseating which is so inevitable a part of getting the graduates disposed upon the greensward. She made saucy little speeches to the young gallants who were sprinkled amid the gay rose-garden of girls, and joked with Tom

Crowninshield about the iced soda-water he had given her, and into which he had surreptitiously conveyed a *soupcou* of cognac. Of all the fair and jocund and seemingly happy company none was outwardly more fair, more jocund, or more happy than Miss Lawrence; and yet secretly she heard constantly ringing in her ears that terrible word "illegitimate." She saw Harry Clisby come into the yard at the head of his class, tall and handsome, and to her eyes the noblest of them all, and her whole being seemed to tingle with indignation at this imputation which had been cast upon him. She resented it with all the force of her strong young will; she hated the gossiping women who had sat there and traduced her lover,—her lover whose first kiss lay yet warm upon her lips.

And yet she knew in her secret heart that what they said was probably true. She had all along known that Harry was the son of a Mormon, although the fact had hitherto meant nothing to her. She looked across the merry crowd with a terrible sinking at her heart, and she needed quite all the pluck of which she had boasted to carry her safely through that afternoon.

It was after the wild scramble for the flowers from the tree that her hardest trial came,

for then Harry Clisby ran out from the struggling, shouting, laughing crowd with his hands full of roses, and with skilful aim threw the whole bunch straight into Kitty's lap. She bowed and smiled her thanks, clutching the blossoms as her girl-friends fell upon her to imitate on a small scale the grand scramble around the tree.

When it was all over, when the noisy cheering, growing hoarser and hoarser, was silent, and the crowd was scattering, Kitty came down from her high seat with the crumpled spoil of the tree pinned into her belt along with the drooping jacqueminots. There were two or three teas to be got through somehow, and then the dance in the evening. Her courage failed her as she thought of it. She would go home at once. She would get away from the crowd and noise, and hide herself where she could be quiet and think.

“Can't you get me a carriage somewhere?” she said to Tom Crowninshield. “Ours won't come until evening, and I don't think I can stand this headache much longer.”

It was not until she was seated in the carriage which he found for her that she said softly to her cousin Jack, who had heard of her departure and hurried solicitously to ask how she was, —

"Will you tell Mr. Clisby that I have gone home? I had promised him the first dance."

All the long drive in from Cambridge to Boston Kitty sorrowfully discussed the situation with herself, and tried to fight down the pain which swelled in her heart. She had been born and nurtured in a circle where a stain upon one's birth was an unpardonable and ineradicable disgrace. She felt, amid all her sorrow, a pang almost of shame, as if some doubt had been cast upon her own lineage; and now and then a throb of anger mingled with her pain, as if her lover had deceived and betrayed her confidence by hiding the truth about his birth. All other feelings, however, merged themselves in an intolerable sense of anguish at the loss of her betrothed. It was characteristic of her training rather than of her nature that there did not for a moment enter her mind any idea of continuing her relations with Harry Clisby. From the moment she had heard applied to him that terrible word "illegitimate," all question of her marrying him was answered forever. It did not occur to her that it could be otherwise. She did not debate that phase of the matter with herself at all, not even turning over in her own mind the obvious plea that a polygamous marriage as an act of

religion was widely different from an ordinary case of illegal union. She only wondered how she could bear to give her lover up; saying to herself that it would not have been so hard yesterday before he had put his love into words, and before that kiss had so bound their lives together.

She felt sure that Harry would understand that he might follow her home, and she was sure he would come; but it was nearly nine o'clock before his card was brought to her. She had been sitting alone in the dark, crying a little now and then, but for the most part too bitterly sad for tears. She scarcely paused to bathe her eyes before hastening down to the parlor; and she came into the dimly lit room with the flowers he had given her still hanging crushed and faded at her belt.

He started up as she entered, and before he spoke he took her in his arms and kissed her fervently. She yielded herself up to his passionate caress an instant; then she freed herself and stood looking at him with trembling lip, and eyes full of tears.

"What is it?" he exclaimed, aware that something had happened, but not in the least suspecting its nature. "What is the matter?"

She turned away from him to throw her-

self into a great easy-chair, and burying her face in her hands upon its arms, she burst into a flood of scalding tears.

He sprang to her side, and put his arms about her, soothing and caressing her. She struggled to regain her self-control, and by degrees her sobs ceased; she sat upright, her bosom heaving and the tears still running from her eyes. He regarded her in concern and bewilderment, as she strove to speak and waved her hand toward the chair from which he had risen on her entrance. Obeying her gesture, he sat down and looked at her with questioning gaze.

“It is terrible,” she said gaspingly, when she was able to speak. “And I ought to have known.”

“Known what?” Clisby demanded, more and more puzzled.

She looked at him an instant with dilating eyes. A sudden coldness came over her.

“You are a Mormon,” she said with an intensity which showed how much she felt the words.

His face fell.

“You have n’t just discovered that,” he returned.

“No,” she answered; “but it never meant anything to me until — until —”

She hesitated, then stopped altogether, looking at him with a face full of piteous appeal. He did not speak, however, and she was forced to go on unassisted.

“Until to-day I heard Mrs. — I heard a woman say —”

She stopped again; the rosy blood flushed her face.

Young Clisby started to his feet, crimson to his temples. His face was hard and set. He leaned his back against the mantel and folded his arms.

“You heard a woman say,” he repeated, taking up and continuing her words, “that my mother was a sealed wife, and that I was born of a polygamous marriage. Was that it?”

“Yes,” Kitty replied, with a slight hesitation, which to his thoroughly aroused perceptions indicated that this was not all.

“Very likely,” he went on, with a little bitter laugh, “this woman that you heard used the ugly words which Gentiles are fond of heaping upon Mormon women. I tell you that my mother is as pure and as lovely as any woman alive.”

Nothing that he could have said would have touched her so deeply. She rose impulsively from her chair and held out her

hand to him. His face softened as he took it, but he went on none the less vehemently.

"It is all very well for old tabbies that know nothing about it to sit in judgment here in Boston on the women of Salt Lake City. If they were there, they'd follow the prevailing religion just as they do now. I don't believe the rubbish myself, but I do know that women like my mother are as conscientious and as true in every way as the people who abuse them."

He dropped her hand and began to pace back and forth on the hearth-rug, trying to restrain an indignation which was evidently of no recent growth.

"And you," he said, at last, stopping before her, "you are like the rest. I did n't try to deceive you. How could I tell that you wouldn't realize what my being a Latter Day Saint meant when I knew that you knew it? And to-day —"

The revulsion of feeling was too bitter. He set his lips together, his whole face white and drawn with misery. Poor Kitty's tears were falling unchecked now. She clung to the corner of the mantel with both hands.

"It is not that," she said chokingly. "All that you say must be true; but it is n't that."

"What is it then?" he demanded almost fiercely. "You wouldn't marry me now; and if it isn't that, what is it?"

"I would marry you if there were only myself to consider," she answered mournfully, but with a certain underlying firmness which showed that she did not even consider the possibility of relenting, "but there are father and mother and my brother. I—"

"Do you love me less than you do them?" he broke in fiercely. "They have had you all your life, and they have each other. I have only you in all the wide world."

She shook her head sadly.

"No," she said, "there is more than that. I might leave them and brave all that the world would say; but—"

"But what?" he demanded, as she paused.

"But afterward—"

"I do not understand," he began. "Afterward I would be so good to you that you could not repent."

Then he met her glance, and saw the blush rising in her pale cheek. A sudden comprehension of her thought came to him.

"Ah!" he cried out with a fresh bitterness, as if he had been stabbed in his most tender spot. "You mean that your children shall never have to say their father was—"

She bent forward swiftly and laid her fingers over his mouth, preventing him from concluding the sentence.

He looked at her with despair in his glance, as if she were separated from him by an impassable gulf. Then he took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. She clung to him sobbing, but even then it did not occur to her to consider the possibility of changing her decision. She felt the misery of the situation with all the terrible keenness which belongs only to the inevitable.

“But you love me,” he said at length, as if trying to reconcile that fact with her renunciation.

“Oh,” she sobbed, “I do love you so!”

No denial she could have spoken would have made him realize how fixed and unsatisfiable was her resolution as did the tone of utter despair in which she said these words. He knew then, although he would not yet give her up, that his pleading would be in vain; yet he pleaded with her, because he could not bear to lose her. He urged her love, and then he claimed her by his own. She had no answer; she could not argue; she only clung to him and begged him to spare her further torture; begged him to leave her, to forget her, and then with the

next breath moaned a pitiful prayer that he would always hold her in remembrance.

The unfeeling clock on the mantel measured the hours into halves and quarters with monotonous regularity until the silvery chime told off the close of Class-Day in midnight; and Harry Clisby took Kitty's face between his hands and devoured it with his hungry gaze as if he were imprinting its least detail upon his sorrowful memory.

"Good-by," he said brokenly, "you will be happy sometime; I am not selfish enough not to wish that with my whole heart, Kitty. I will go back to Salt Lake."

"Of course," Jack Talbot said meditatively, when some incomplete knowledge of what had occurred came to him through Clisby, and he had bidden his friend good-by,—"of course it's tough; but what could Harry have been thinking of any way to suppose that one of our family could marry a Mormon?"

To which the young lady to whom he confided his opinion assented unhesitatingly; but she added, with a sigh whose profundity seemed to include all the inexplicable misfortunes of life,—

"Such a handsome fellow as he was too."



Interlude Seventh.



A FISHING-PARTY.

A FISHING-PARTY.

[The warm air from the fields comes blowing down through the bushes and shrubs on the river's brink, and wraps the two young persons who have moored their punt in the shade of the thickest growth. The languid stream seems hardly to move, as if it shared with all nature the languid, drowsy calm of the time. Nobody who was not both young and fond of flirtation would have been found in such a situation on that sunny afternoon; and it was evident, had the most casual observer been present to notice, that there was little more than the most shallow pretence in the fishing which they were apparently there for.]

She. It is so warm that no fish that was not an idiot would stir to bite this afternoon. I told you that it was too warm to come.

He. Oh, no, not too warm to come, or you would not have come.

She. It is too warm.

He. Then what did you come for?

She. Simply because you teased so.

He. How weak-minded!

She. Nothing of the sort. I wanted you to be punished for bothering me.

He. And so you nobly sacrificed yourself.

She. Of course. A girl always sacrifices herself to the good of others.

He. That accounts for the frequency of the refusal of men.

She. Oh, no. That is to be accounted for by the fact that there are limits beyond which even feminine self-sacrifice cannot go.

He. But you are fond of fishing, you said.

She. Did I? Then I am.

He. That is logical.

She. Of course it is logical. I know that I always tell the truth; and if I said that I am fond of fishing, it follows that I must be.

He. That is conclusive.

She. Of course if a man had said it it would be different.

He. Yes; quite different.

She. But I did not say that I was fond of broiling.

He. That is one of the legitimate attractions of fishing.

She. But I do not believe that there is a single fish in all this stupid river.

He. Who cares, so long as we are here?

She. Well, I like that!

He. Do you?

She. But we came after fish.

He. Did we?

She. Did n't we?

He. I did n't.

She. What did you come for?

He. You.

[The young woman preserves a fine indifference and almost an air of unconsciousness under this compliment, although a faint blush does steal up into her soft cheek, moistly and enchantingly rosy before. She jerks at her line with sudden vehemence.]

She. Oh, I've got a bite! A real one.

He. Yes; I nibbled.

[She flushes more than ever, but she will not show that she understands.]

She. What do you mean?

He. What I said.

She. But that was nonsense.

He. Oh, of course, tagging after a girl is always nonsense.

She. "Tagging after a girl"! What an elegant expression!

He. Not elegant, but expressive.

She. Expressive!

He. Yes, it just expresses how we follow on as the silly fish go after the hook.

She. They don't.

He. But you said that you had a nibble.

She. Oh, that was nothing.

He. It might prove to be something if you would only try to land your fish.

She (letting her line run out with the sluggish current). Oh, it was probably a mud-fish or an eel. Nothing else would bite, such a day as this.

He. But to land it would show so much the more skill on your part.

She. But it would be of no good after it was landed.

He. Thank you.

She (innocently). For what?

He (crossly). You have something on your line ; you had better attend to that.

She. Goodness ! How it pulls ! I should n't have thought that any living thing could be so lively on so hot a day. It is probably a sea-serpent.

He. Sweets to the sweet !

She. Don't lose your temper. It — Oh !

[She has pulled in her line until the head of a great eel appears above the surface, writhing in contortions which are anything but reassuring ; and then with a scream of horror she allows it to slip through her fingers, so that her prey once more disappears under the water.]

She. Oh, it is an eel !

He. Apparently it is.

She. Oh the horrid, nasty thing ! To get on my hook !

He. You put the hook out for him ; it isn't likely that the poor fool is any better pleased with the state of things than you are.

She (too much excited over the danger that the monster which she has snared may come into the boat and avenge itself by devouring her bodily to consider whether these last words do or do not contain some hidden meaning). Oh, what shall I

do? How shall I get that dreadful great thing off my line?

He (heartlessly). He isn't on your line, you know; he is on your hook.

She. Oh, what shall I do?

He. You might land him.

She. Oh, I never, never could! I'll throw away my line first.

He. But you would n't let him go through life dragging a hook and line after him, would you?

[His tone and manner are so significant that it is impossible for her to pretend that she does not understand the application of his remark. He is so plainly identifying the case of the unlucky eel with his own that there is instantly the exhilaration of a personal flavor to the conversation which makes her for the moment forget the awful peril of having an aqueous monster attached to her by a cord. A feminine and coquettish desire to improve the opportunities of the situation puts for the instant the eel out of her mind entirely.]

She. That does not trouble me. He'd be sure to get rid of it somehow. They always do.

[It seems to him that she is softening, and he is emboldened to move somewhat nearer to her.]

He. No, he could n't. The bait is too tempting, and your hook is too sharp.

She. You'll tip the boat over if you lean over so far this way.

He. I'll risk the boat. Won't you take me off the hook, Kathie?

She (with a well-feigned appearance of entirely misunderstanding). You, Captain Dix?

He (venturing to steal an arm about her waist). You can't have failed to see how fond of you I am ; and in this uncertainty I am far worse off than that unlucky eel.

She. But he is n't off, you know ; he is on.

He. Don't tease me, darling.

[While he is speaking, a wicked smile of the most heartless and malicious mischief brings out every dimple in Mistress Kathie's bewitching face ; and she occupies herself in swiftly and unobtrusively gathering up her line, so that as the captain attempts to follow up his appeal with an impassioned kiss, by a quick and swift jerk she lands the eel, which proves to be an enormous fellow, full in the lap of her enamoured swain. Captain Dix starts back with a leap which nearly overturns the boat, uttering at the same time a word which indicates at least a cursory acquaintance with theological terms.]

She. Don't swear.

He (with more temper than politeness). Oh, no ! Of course not. Women always take refuge in morality after they have outraged all decency !

She. I must say you are amiable. I—

[But Miss Kathie, like many another before her, has entered upon an enterprise without sufficiently considering what the consequences may be. The eel is writhing and wriggling about on the bottom of the boat in a manner calculated to throw an entire boarding-school into hysterics, and it suddenly flings itself

upon the damsel's feet. She has been so absorbed in watching the face of her companion that she has forgotten all about the fish, but now her wits entirely desert her, and she bursts into a series of shrieks which would alarm the entire neighborhood were there any neighbors in it to be alarmed.]

She. Oh, save me! Save me!

He (with a vicious and wholly reprehensible delight in her distress). You do not seem to like it now that it is here.

She. Oh, take it away! Take it away!

He. I should not think of interfering with your capture.

She. I will jump overboard.

He. You will find it very damp in the river, I assure you.

[*The eel emphasizes this remark by thrashing about anew, as if the mention of the dampness of its native element were more than it could bear.*]

She. Oh, Captain Dix! Oh, do, do, do take it away!

He (secretly relenting, but not ready to show his pity). What did you pull it in for?

She. Oh, I don't know! Oh, I'll do anything for you if you will only kill that horrible creature!

[*The eel for the moment relapses into comparative quiescence, and the Captain is therefore able to steel his heart against the misery he beholds.*]

He (reclining comfortably and easily in the

bow of the punt). I do not at this interesting moment happen to think of anything that I really want you to do. Besides, if I did, it would seem too much like compulsion for me to mention it.

She (poised perilously on the stern). Oh, dear, dear ! I hate you !

He. It is kind of you to take the trouble to think of me at all.

She. I did n't suppose that you could possibly be so cruel !

He (lighting a cigarette with much coolness). I know you won't mind my smoking, especially as the wind blows this way.

She. There is n't any wind.

He. Be careful or you will fall overboard.

[The eel meanwhile, having been left entirely undisturbed for a few moments, has become calm after its first excess of nervousness, which apparently was but a not unnatural uneasiness at finding itself among complete and wholly unsympathetic strangers. It lies now almost motionless upon the bottom of the boat, perhaps wondering what it has been brought there for, and perhaps pondering upon possible means of escape. The cessation of its violence gives Miss Kathie an opportunity to recover something of her own calmness. She makes a desperate attempt to appear wholly at her ease, and assumes an air of withering severity.]

He (casually giving the eel a touch with the toe of his boot). It is strange what mistakes one

may make, Miss Blair : I had always thought of you as a lady until that eel landed in my lap.

She. You are intolerable !

He. And you —

[*The eel, aroused by the Captain's touch, now begins a new and particularly lively series of gymnastics, which almost throw Miss Blair into convulsions. She makes a brave endeavor to restrain herself, but it is an utter failure, and she ends by burying her face in her hands and bursting into tears.*]

He (never being able to endure the sight of a woman in tears). Hem !

She (perceiving that she has touched him, and yet keeping the corner of an eye fixed upon the eel, while she is with another watching her companion). Oh ! oh ! oh !

He. Oh, don't cry. I can throw the beast overboard, if you like.

She. Oh, please, please !

He. You don't object to losing your fish ?

[*Her only reply is that of increased sobs, and after enduring it as long as his tender nature can, the Captain rises to return the captive eel to its native element. She watches him until he has the creature at the very edge of the boat, when she suddenly and startlingly arrests him.*]

She. Stop !

He. What is it ?

She. That is my eel that you are throwing away.

[He drops it in amazement, setting his foot upon it in a vain attempt to reduce it to that calmness which is essential to the production of a good effect in polite society.]

He. What? Do you mean that you don't want it thrown overboard?

She. I don't think that you have a right to throw away what does not belong to you.

He. That is so like a girl!

She (recovering her spirits a little). What is? The eel?

He. Yes; one is as slippery as the other.

She (demurely). Thank you.

He (sarcastically). Oh, pray don't mention it. Do you want this beastly thing thrown overboard or not?

[A provoking gleam of mischief flashes into her face, which somehow sets his heart beating. She regards him with an arch side-look not unmixed with a certain condescension.]

She. I don't know. It is all I have caught, you see.

He. Well, what of that?

She. So it would be a pity to throw it away if I have to go home without anything to show for the whole afternoon's fishing.

[He regards her a moment in a dazed sort of way, and then he rushes to the stern of the boat and clasps her in his arms, wholly regardless of the eel or the stability of the punt.]

He. You blessed, teasing darling !

She (*after a moment of inarticulate bliss*). I hope you are satisfied now.

He. To be landed? Yes, thank you. Anything is better than to be in suspense.

She. Anything is better !

He (*laughing, and clasping her more closely*). Yes ; even this.

She. How mean of you to say that !

He. But I landed in Paradise, you know.

She. Oh, thank you ! You could hardly say less, one would think, under the circumstances.

He. But I know I feel so much more. I even forgive you the eel.

[*The eel, perhaps aroused by the mention of his name to a consciousness that he is neglecting his opportunities to take part in this comedy, becomes instantly and most inopportunely as lively as ever, and begins to execute underfoot a series of jocund movements, which may be designed to celebrate the joyous consummation of affairs, but which fail to appeal to the young woman's sense of fitness. When he ends by twining himself in a chill and slippery ecstasy of emotion about Miss Kathie's trim ankles, she breaks in upon the bliss of her lover with a shriek of the most piercing wildness.*]

He. What is it, dear ?

She. Oh, that eel ! that eel ! Take it away !

He. Where is it ? I don't see it.

She. Oh, I 'm all tied up in it !

He. Where ?

She. If you don't take it away this minute, I 'll never speak to you again !

[Whereupon he goes down upon his knees in the bottom of the boat, and manages to grasp the creature by the head, and in a moment more that unfortunate eel has been offered up, an innocent victim, upon the altar of their new-found happiness, and deep peace descends upon the punt and its occupants.]

Cale the Eighth.



FRANKLIN'S ADVENTURE.



FRANKLIN'S ADVENTURE.

“Brrr-r-r! Bimbé-bimbé-blomb! Brr-r-r!”

The hideous droning which was neither speech nor song had been going on for hours, and Franklin began at last to be stupefied with it as if it were a drug. It was perhaps an incantation that the hags were droning there in the closed hut which it would be death for a man to enter. It might be a prayer to the infernal gods in whose honor he was to be sacrificed at sunset.

“Brrr-r-r! Bimbé-bimbé-blomb!”

He had become so benumbed by the constraint of the position in which he was bound, by the fatigue of sleeplessness, by the dull droning of the old hags yonder, that he had wholly ceased to have any sensation of concern. He thought of his approaching fate as one thinks of events that have already befallen one in dreams.

“Brrr-r-r! Bimbé-bimbé-blomb! Brr-r!”

It was probable, he reflected sleepily, that

the naked priestesses yonder were informing their god of his early arrival in the other world, and it did seem to the victim that it must be a very dull god that needed to be told over so many times in the same words. There was now and then a dull rumble, as if some over-ardent priestess felt impelled to beat upon some sort of a rude drum, but was promptly suppressed by her sisters.

Franklin even smiled, lying there in an African hut, nobody knew how many miles away from any other white man, thinking how absurd an ending this was for the life of his father's son, the boy of so many hopes.

"Brrr-r-r! Bimbé-bimbé-blomb!"

He reflected that his father had had a keen sense of humor, and that had he lived to share this experience with his son he would at least have seen how consumedly droll this interminable howling of the naked women in their sacred hut of palm-leaves, droning to their stupid idea of a deity, really was.

He was not sure how it would seem to Lady Mary. He bit his lip suddenly. It was not good to think of Lady Mary in a place and at a time like this. He had been wandering about for almost a year, trying to fling away his life decently; and now that there had come to him in a way which seemed

almost miraculous the information that Lady Mary was, after all, not to marry the Duke, it was the irony of fate that he should be trapped and doomed to death. He reflected that this was the result of his own headstrong disregard of all warnings. When he got that letter which had been wandering from one missionary station to another for six months, he had struck straight through the forest for the coast, and this was the result. Well, Lady Mary had sent him away, and —

He muttered a curse under his breath, and reflected how little such philosophy consoled him for the loss of the happiness toward which he had been hastening. Then he shook himself angrily, and strove again to regain the drowsy indifference which he so steadfastly cultivated. The heat and the influences of the time helped him, and once more he put Lady Mary and all that lay outside of the filthy hut out of his thoughts, and drifted away toward sleep. Deeper and deeper became his semi-oblivion. The chirr of the insects in the hot air outside mingled with the death-song of the old women, until all were blended in one indistinguishable blur of sound. Suddenly the song of the chanters changed, —

“Elomb-zizi! Errrr-r-r! Zizi-bim-bimbé-zizi!”

The song took on a new character, a fresh energy, and now at regular intervals the dull thud of the drum was heard.

“Really the old ladies are waking up,” Franklin reflected in the same dispassionate fashion as before. “The old god either will not hear, or he is as sleepy as I am, and they must wake him.”

The sudden flash which came from the raising of the mat before the door of the hut in which he lay bound aroused him with a shuddering thrill. His first thought was that the hour of death had come to him; but in an instant he reflected that at least it was not yet much past the middle of the afternoon. He could tell this by the intolerable heat and by the sunlight which gushed hotly into the hut, as if the mat at the entrance had been a dam to keep back the flow of a tide of splendor.

A woman was for an instant silhouetted against the sky, and then the curtain dropped, leaving a blinding darkness in place of the blinding light. Franklin closed his eyes once more and lay still.

He was aware that the new-comer was creeping toward him, muttering to herself in

the same strange tongue that was being sung by the women in the hut over there,— a tongue of which, in all his wanderings in Africa, he had never before heard a syllable, and which bore no sort of resemblance to the ordinary language of his captors.

A sharp, stinging pain in his leg made him start and shrink as far as his bonds would permit him. He opened his eyes, and in the half darkness saw the old hag who crouched over him muttering in the strange tongue collecting his blood in a small gourd. She had thrust a sharp wooden skewer into his leg, and from the wound a stream of blood was trickling down.

“ You bleed me too quickly, mother,” he said in the Gambian dialect. “ You will have it all soon; why take it a little at a time? ”

The hag started at his voice, and turned toward his face.

“ Oh, I am awake,” he said, “ if that is what you want to know. Did you think I would sleep while you punched my body full of holes? ”

The woman leaned forward, still holding the gourd under the wound so that no drop of blood should fall to the ground; while with the other hand she thrust back the hair which was tossed over Franklin’s forehead.

Then she drew from her girdle a bit of something sticky, wrapped in a fragment of palm-leaf. This she spread like an ointment upon the place she had cut. It stung like fire, but the bleeding was stanch'd at once.

"Wou! I'll not engage you as a surgeon if I ever need one," Franklin exclaimed, in English. "Your treatment may be effective, but it hurts like the deuce."

As he spoke, the old woman set the gourd in which she had been gathering his blood carefully upon the ground near the door of the hut. Then she reached up her long, skinny arms to the thatched roof, and tore a hole through which the light came streaming.

"Nor was that absolutely necessary," the prisoner began in English; then he went on in the Gambian speech: "No sunlight for me, mother. I am to be despatched soon enough; there is no need to roast me beforehand. I dare say you will do that afterward."

The thought which his words suggested gave him the keenest pang that he had known since he had been overcome and bound there by the Black Falls. It had not before occurred to him that he was not only to be killed, but to be eaten afterward. He had steeled himself against the thought of death; but at the idea of what was to come

after an irrepressible shudder ran through his body.

“*Blomb-zizi-zizi-bim-bim-zizi!*” sang the invisible chorus; and for the first time the full horror of the situation thrust itself upon him, despite all his marvellous self-control and the indifference to life which he had so long cultivated.

The hag beside him bent over and examined his face intently with her purblind eyes. Her fetid breath was in his face, her black and broken teeth grinded ghastly before him. There were a horde like her yonder chanting his death-song, and their foul hands would greedily tear his limbs at the feast to-night. A horrible feeling of nausea and faintness overcame him, from which he was aroused by an exclamation of the woman who bent over him.

“It is the White Hunter,” she said in the Palmbé dialect.

Franklin opened his eyes in astonishment.

“What do you know about white hunters?” he demanded.

“The White Hunter killed the bush-cat at the snake-hole,” the woman answered in a whisper. “The White Hunter saved the son of my son.”

Like a vivid vision there rose before

Franklin that day when he had saved the boy from the bush-cat in the lower valley. The cry of the old woman who had carried the boy away into the forest seemed again to ring in his ears, and he knew that this was she. Instantly the instinct of self-preservation flamed up in his breast. He was alive in every fibre of his being. He regarded the old woman with burning eyes. He did not waste breath by asking her to save him. His eyes indeed besought aid, but he was not one to say what was already known. Besides, there were guards alongside the hut, crouched on the shady side of the little building to escape the glare of the sun, and he had no mind to be overheard by them in anything which might arouse suspicion. He all at once assumed that this old creature was to save him, and he looked at her with the fierceness of his conviction shining in his face.

“Zizi-zizi-bim-bim-zizi !”

The old woman shuddered at the sound. She pointed her skinny finger toward the hut where the women were chanting this long-drawn-out refrain, and shook her head. Then she laid her finger upon her lips in that gesture enjoining silence which is universal in civilized and uncivilized lands. She said

not a word, but sat down upon the ground and smoothed a space with the palm of her hand. Then with her lean and bony forefinger she began to draw rude figures upon it. First she made a shapeless figure upon one side of the place she had smoothed, leaving the outside of it open and vague. She looked up at Franklin as she did so, as if to see whether he understood this beginning of her signs. His face gave no indication of comprehension. The old woman swept her arms abroad in a wild unfolding gesture, and he instantly seized the idea that this figure stood for the forest, and that the woman was making a map.

Franklin nodded, but did not speak, and the other went on with the utmost rapidity making marks in the sand. She showed him, still working in silence, and indicating her meaning always by signs, the relative position of the hut where they were to that in which the women were singing, to the council house of the village, and to various objects. Then she took hold of the ropes of twisted palm fibre which bound him, and with her teeth tore at them with so much energy that in an incredibly short time he was free.

Franklin sat up and stretched his cramped limbs. He was alive again, and the sweet-

ness of the joy of mere existence turned him half giddy. He was unarmed, half naked, alone and defenceless in the midst of hostile tribes, and yet the prospect of escape made the blood gush through his veins with all its old energy. He watched as for his life while the old woman drew with her black finger a line from the spot which indicated upon her rude map the hut where they were to the edge of the woods. Three times she made him trace it over with his own finger, pointing out to him the landmarks. Then with a sudden sweep of the hand she brushed away all traces of the diagram. She did not in providing for his safety forget her own.

All this had been done with a swiftness which showed plainly enough that the woman did not wish to convey to those who had sent her for the blood the impression that she had lingered beyond the time needed for getting it. Now she crept to the side of the hut opposite the doorway, and marked two lines upon the ground. Then she stole back to the side of Franklin.

“When the drums beat,” she whispered, “the guards will leave. Dig through the wall quickly, and go the way to the forest. Tomorrow there will be food and a weapon in the hollow tree by the Red Fall.”

She caught up the gourd from the ground, and was gone in so short a space that he had not even time to thank her. Evidently she carried the blood into the hut where the women were singing, for almost immediately there arose a perfect fury of sound from the chorus.

“Zizi-zizi-bim-blobm !”

The whole air resounded through the hot afternoon with the shrill cries of the women, whose incantations became each instant more fierce and barbarous.

For a time Franklin sat up and rested his tired muscles, strained and aching from the constraint in one position. Then he reflected that it was not unlikely that the guards would look into the hut before they left their charge to go to join the procession which would come to conduct him to the banquet.

“It is to be a banquet in my honor,” he reflected grimly; “and yet it would be like that of a certain convocation of politic worms, I should be eaten rather than eat.”

He lay down again in the position in which he had been tied, arranging the broken ropes so that in the dim light it might seem to any one who looked in that they were still in place. He lay thinking of the chances of escape. He thought whimsically of how

dramatically he could tell this story at one of Lady Goldhammer's afternoon teas, could he but get safely back to England; and he seemed to see the bright eyes and parted lips of Lady Mary as they would look while he talked. She would shudder as he spoke of the blood, and it was not improbable that she would also shudder could she see him now. He smiled at the thought. Unwashed, unkempt, half-naked, the long scar from that wound he had received in the fight with the Ashangoes still red across his shoulder, he was not exactly the figure to put in an appearance in the most exclusive drawing-room in all London.

It seemed to him that the afternoon would never end. He thought that at least the old women must have sore throats to-morrow after keeping up that caterwauling all day long. He wondered whether they would drink his blood, mingled with some infernal brew of magical herbs and unspeakable things, or whether they would besmear the red drops over their hideous bodies. Now that he felt sure of escaping, even the idea of their intention of dining upon him only affected him as a bit of exquisite satire. He could afford to smile at them now, with all the accumulated horrors of their intents.

He should foil them. He should vindicate the fame which he had won among the tribes all along the river of being a wizard too powerful to be resisted. He wished that he could set fire to their village before leaving them. It would be a pleasant parting testimony of his feelings toward them. However, perhaps that was not to be thought of. If he escaped, that was the main thing. With Lady Mary waiting there in England, it was not well to run the risks which he had so recklessly encountered in the days when he wanted rather to be rid of his life than to preserve it. He would try to sleep while he had time; he might find it long before there were another opportunity. He endeavored to forget everything, and at length he really did fall into a half-dozen full of wild dreams.

Suddenly the sharp stroke of a drum made him start. He was broad awake in an instant. He heard his guards, who had probably been sleeping on the shady side of the hut and who had not stirred for hours, get up with some muttered speech. One of them came and thrust his head through the doorway, but he instantly withdrew it; and as soon as he had done so, Franklin sprang to his task of making his way through the

side of the hut. It was a simple matter of tearing through a slight wattle of twigs and palm-leaves, and it was quickly accomplished. He peered out through the opening. A few shrubs grew close by, and, worming his way out of the hut, he crouched a moment among these, getting his direction.

The noise of the drums, the howling of the natives, and the bellowing of the horns of the priest combined in a din which made him shudder. The song of the old women was done now, and a dozen indistinguishable barbaric lays had taken its place, as if the people were intoxicated with joy over the coming sacrifice — or was it the feast?

The thought of the feast started Franklin on his way toward the forest. Half creeping and half running, he made his way from shrub to shrub, from behind one hut to another, constantly drawing away from the noise of the assembly. He saw in a hut he passed a gourd half filled with food. He seized it and went on his way, eating greedily with his hands. He was half famished, and thirst tormented him to the point of madness. The woods were near now. He had only to cross an open space, and then the coverts of thickly growing bushes would receive him.

Suddenly a dog sprang out from one of the huts, an ill-conditioned, half-starved brute, and barked sharply. At the sound a chorus of dogs all over the village took up the cry and yelped with a vehemence that was to Franklin hardly less than maddening. It seemed as if the cries must attract attention, even amid the noise of the infernal shoutings with which the natives were now proceeding toward the hut from which the victim had escaped. He gave a wild leap over a low paling which lay before him, and ran for the forest. He plunged into a thicket of acacia bushes that scratched and tore his naked shoulders. He did not heed the pain, for he was at last in the woods, and in the woods he felt himself a match for a whole tribe of Africans.

The branches closed behind him just as there arose a terrible yell from the village, which proclaimed that the cannibals had discovered the escape of their supper.

Franklin threw back his head and replied with a yell of triumph. Beyond were freedom and Lady Mary.



Interlude Eighth.



IN THE JURY-ROOM.



IN THE JURY-ROOM.

THE place is a Western State of recent creation, and the scene a jury-room into which the sheriff has just introduced a jury which chances to be composed exclusively of women. The room is grimy and cheerless, furnished only with a dozen arm-chairs and a long table upon which lie a heap of soiled cards bearing the words "guilty" and "not guilty," and which have apparently been used in determining the culpability or innocence of half the inhabitants of the State.

The ladies have the air of being rather flustered and uncertain, and preserve a certain watchfulness as long as the sheriff is present, as if they feared to betray their unfamiliarity with the situation. The instant he is gone and the door is locked behind him, there is an appearance of relief in the whole company.

"There," Mrs. Blake remarks, "I am glad that the sheriff's gone. He has a sort of grin on all the time that I simply cannot stand."

"Yes," Mrs. Fritz acquiesces. "He seems to think it is awfully funny to have a jury all of women. I don't see what there is in it that's so awfully amusing."

"Oh, there are some men that always find anything that a woman does funny," Mrs. Dyer puts in. "I am sure women do things as well as men."

"Isn't it a glorious triumph for the cause," observes Miss Skinner, with ardor, "to have at last a jury of women? At last woman can be tried by her peers. It is —"

The other members of the company are perfectly well aware that if Miss Skinner, who is by profession a woman's rights orator, be allowed to go on without interruption, she will talk for the rest of the day upon the "cause;" so two or three break in upon her at the same time.

"Yes, yes," Mrs. Small says hastily. "It is glorious, as you say, Miss Skinner, but I'd like to get through with it and get home. My baby's sick, and I don't want to stay away from her a moment longer than I have to."

"Oh, is she sick?" Mrs. Blake asks sympathetically. "Poor little thing! What is the matter?"

The two ladies plunge into a private and deeply absorbing discussion of the ailments of Mrs. Small's offspring, from which they pass to the illnesses of babies in general, and are startled by the observance of Miss Sharp that they must show that they can judge as impartially and as judicially as men.

"I agree with you," the forewoman, Mrs. Dingly, returns. "It is a grave responsibility that we have assumed, and we must show ourselves worthy of it."

"Is there any fine for not deciding right?" asks timid Mrs. Fairly.

"Fine?" retorts Miss Sharp, with splendid scorn. "Whatever we do is right."

"Oh, no," Mrs. Fritz says. "My husband is a lawyer, and he told me yesterday that we had to decide according to the evidence, or the judge could set the verdict aside."

"And according to the law," adds Miss Skinner, who does not wish to seem less fully informed than her companion.

"Yes, according to the law and the evidence," the other lady says, accepting the amendment.

"But how can we tell what is according to the law?" Mrs. Fairly inquires, looking quite alarmed at the weight of her responsibilities.

"That's just what the judge told us when he charged us," replies the forewoman, with a shade of impatience in her tone.

"Oh, I could n't understand what he said at all!" exclaims Mrs. Fairly, more overwhelmed than ever. "I wish I'd said I would n't be on the jury, anyway!"

"Your saying you would n't be on it would n't have let you off," Miss Skinner returns witheringly. "Women can no longer shirk the responsibilities of civilization."

This grand phrase completes the demoralization of poor timid Mrs. Fairly, who, with tears in her eyes, turns for comfort to a placid motherly woman who has sat down beside her.

"Oh, Mrs. Jones," she gasps, "what shall I do? I don't know anything about law and evidence."

The other smiles upon her with comfortable capaciousness.

"Oh, what difference does that make?" she responds. "I don't know anything about law or evidence, either; but I know I'm going to vote against that bold-faced hussy that sat there in the witness-box as bold as brass, and lied away so glib."

This remark causes so great a commotion that two ladies who have been engaged in exchanging receipts for cake, writing them down with the stub of a pencil on the backs of the dirty verdict cards, pause in the midst of their conversation, and Mrs. Small and Mrs. Blake are arrested in their exhaustive histories of all the illnesses their children have ever had.

"Oh, you must n't talk that way," Mrs. Dingly exclaims, much shocked. "That was evidence, and we have n't any right to say that evidence is a lie."

Mrs. Jones smiles on with unruffled serenity.

"If I know a thing is a lie, I shall say it's a lie, whether it's evidence or not," she announces. "And for that matter," she adds stoutly, "if it was law and I knew it was n't true, I'd say so just the same."

The confusion of tongues which arises in response to this is such as to make it impossible to catch the whole of any remark.

“Oh, my ! I — ”

“Why, who ever — ”

“Did you ever hear — ”

“But you might be — ”

“But the cause — ”

The forewoman at length is constrained to rap on the table to bring things to something like order.

“There, there !” she says. “It will never do to go on like this. We shall never come to any decision at this rate.”

“Decision !” sniffs Miss Skinner. “I came to a decision the minute I saw that dreadful-looking woman. The idea of her bringing suit against that fine-looking man ! It was utterly absurd !”

“But you hadn’t any right to make up your mind till you had heard the witnesses.”

“I *did*, just the same,” is the defiant rejoinder ; “and I’d like to know who’s going to make me change it.”

“But you might be fined for contempt of court.”

“Oh, what is contempt of court ?” moans Mrs. Fairly, appalled at this new bugbear which has sprung up in her path.

“Bother !” exclaims Miss Skinner. “They can’t fine us for what we say here. Besides, there’s a penalty for telling what is said in the jury-room. The judge said so.”

“Well, any way,” Mrs. Dingly says, somewhat

taken aback, "we have to make up our minds now according to what we heard in the court."

"Oh, well, anybody whose mind is n't made up may make it up," is the sneering rejoinder; "but it does not take me forever to make up my mind when the whole thing is as plain as a pikestaff."

The ladies murmur a little among themselves, to indicate their sense that this language is rather too strong; and then the two who were interested in cookery turn back to their occupation.

"Did you say three eggs or four?" one asks the other.

"And as I was saying," Mrs. Blake remarks to Mrs. Small, "after he had been sick for three weeks he was so thin that you would n't have known him."

"Oh, I wanted to ask you about that ruffled trimming," Mrs. Dyer says to Mrs. Fort.

There is an interval of varied conversation; and at the end of ten minutes Miss Skinner, who is very jealous of the dignity of forewoman, which has been conferred upon Mrs. Dingly when she coveted it herself, looks sharply at that lady.

"Don't you think that it is time for us to take a vote?" she asks.

"Oh, by all means," Mrs. Dingly answers. "We will take a vote if the ladies are ready. I thought some might like to discuss a little further first."

"How do we vote?" some one asks.

"We put those things into a box," the forewoman replies, indicating with a wave of her hand the dirty cards, and discovering with evident disapproval the use to which these are being put by the ladies of culinary inclination. "That is, if there are any of them left when we are ready to use them."

"Oh, my!" one of the culprits observes to the other under her breath. "How sharp some folks can be!"

"Yes," the other retorts; "especially if they're set up a little by an office."

"But there is n't any box," some observing member of the jury declares.

"There ought to be," is the response.

A search of the room failing to bring to light anything in the nature of a box, there is at first dire perplexity, but at length Miss Sharp has a brilliant thought.

"The sheriff said that if we wanted to know anything we were to rap on the door," she observes.

The dozen women look at one another in questioning silence. This proceeding seems to them so bold that only a stout heart could think of venturing upon it.

"Will somebody please rap?" the forewoman says rather timidly.

"It's your place to rap," Miss Skinner answers with evident enjoyment.

"But I thought somebody nearer the door — "

"Nobody else has any right to knock," is the uncompromising reply; and although Mrs. Dingly has secretly her doubts about this, she is not prepared to dispute the proposition.

"Well, I am ready to do my duty," she observes with a smile, endeavoring to cover her timidity with a show of facetiousness.

She goes to the door and raps timidly, but so faintly that it would be impossible for one without to hear.

"Oh, that is no use," sniffs Miss Skinner. "You must knock louder than that."

The second rap is hardly less ineffectual than the first, but at the third the sheriff puts in his head.

"What is wanted?" he asks. "Is the verdict ready?"

"Not yet," Mrs. Dingly answers. "We have n't anything to vote in. The box is gone."

The sheriff grins in a manner which the ladies feel to be highly offensive.

"Box," he echoes. "There ain't no box. The men vote in their hats."

The ladies of the jury exchange glances expressing indignation at this last crowning insult to Womanhood — with a large W.

"But we can't vote that way," Mrs. Dingly ventures to observe.

"I suppose you can't very tidily vote in your

bonnets," the sheriff returns with facetiousness excessively ill-timed. "You may have my hat."

He holds out his hat, and Mrs. Dingly takes it in an automatic manner.

"There ain't nothing more ; is there?" he asks, with a grin even more offensive than the previous one, and withdraws.

Mrs. Dingly stands for a moment with her eyes fixed on the hat in her hand as if it were a loathsome reptile. Then she walks to the table and drops it.

"I would n't vote in his hat if I never voted at all!" she exclaims.

This declaration is received with general approbation, and a consultation ensues upon the possible methods of taking a vote. It is at length decided that the votes shall be placed in a pile, face downward, on the table, and then counted. This important matter being disposed of, the fore-woman calls for the vote.

It is evident from the consternation with which the call is received that there is not a full readiness among the company to give their ballot.

"I — I don't think I have made up my mind quite," one juror said timidly, looking about her with an appealing glance for moral support.

"I've made up my mind to vote against that horrid woman," Miss Skinner announces with acrid emphasis ; "and if you will tell me which of these votes is against her, I 'll vote it this very minute."

“Why, ‘guilty’ would be against her; or—or ‘not guilty,’” the forewoman replies with growing confusion. “I don’t think I am quite clear myself, dear; though, of course,” she adds, brightening visibly under the inspiration of a timely idea, “we can make it either way we please, if we only agree beforehand.”

“Oh, that is not right at all,” Miss Sharp breaks in. “One of the persons in the case is the plaintiff and the other is the defendant, and guilty has to be for one and not guilty for the other.”

“But which is which?”

“I don’t remember exactly; but it’s so, any way.”

“My husband told me to vote ‘not guilty,’” Mrs. Fritz remarks pleasantly, “and he’s a friend of the man; so ‘not guilty’ must be voting for him and ‘guilty’ for the woman.”

“I’ll tell you how you can tell,” speaks a juror who has thus far been too deeply engaged in counting the stitches of a piece of very elaborate fancy knitting to take much part in the conversation. “My husband told me that the name of the person that came first in the name of the case is the one that you give a verdict for if you vote ‘guilty,’ and the name of the one that comes last is the one you vote for if you vote ‘not guilty.’”

“But what is the name of this case?” some one inquires.

There is an awful pause of half a moment.

"I don't quite remember whether it is 'Greenhalnge *vs.* Talbot' or 'Talbot *vs.* Greenhalnge,'" the forewoman responds hesitatingly. "Can anybody tell?"

Not only anybody but everybody is ready to tell, but unfortunately there is a great diversity in the opinions, and it is discovered that there are about equal numbers who favor each reading. After a good deal of wrangling over this point it is at length decided that there is nothing for it but to appeal to the sheriff, and that functionary is accordingly once more summoned by a rap upon the door.

"Well, ladies," the sheriff remarks pleasantly, putting in his head. "What can I do for you this time? Verdict ready at last?"

"Not quite, sir," Mrs. Dingly answers. "We only wanted to ask what the name of this case is."

"What the — Great Scott!" the sheriff cries. "Ain't you got as far as the name of the case yet?"

The forewoman regards him with a look of outraged dignity.

"We simply wished to inquire," she responds.

The sheriff comes in and closes the door behind him.

"Oh, certainly," he answers. "The case is that of 'Greenhalnge *vs.* Talbot,' for obtaining money under fraudulent pretences."

"And Talbot is the man?" a juror asks.

"Yes, Talbot is the man. Miss Greenhalng claims that he borrowed money of her under pretence of intended marriage."

"Do you think he did?" asks Mrs. Blake with the utmost *naïveté*.

"Great Scott!" the sheriff responds. "You don't expect me to give an opinion, do you? I'm under oath, ladies."

"Well, I did n't know but you could tell something about it," Mrs. Blake explains. "It is dreadfully confusing."

Miss Skinner regards her with eyes of concentrated rage, and the instant the door is closed behind the sheriff she falls upon her.

"I should think that for the credit of Womanhood you might have been more careful what you said to that sheriff!" she exclaims. "He will go and tell just what you said to him. For my part I should think that there might have been sense enough in the room to keep from calling him in at all. I said all the time that it was 'Greenhalng *vs.* Talbot.' "

"I beg your pardon," the forewoman replies, goaded at last by the repeated attacks of Miss Skinner to strike back, "but it was because you were so positive that it was 'Talbot *vs.* Greenhalng' that I felt that there was no way of convincing you short of calling in the sheriff."

The murmur of the members shows so plainly that the general sentiment is with Mrs. Dingly that

Miss Skinner does not venture to pursue the subject ; but not to be put down entirely, she remarks that at least now that the point is settled it would be well to take a vote at last.

“ Very well,” Mrs. Dingly returns. “ We will take a vote, then. Those that are in favor of Miss Greenhalnge will vote ‘ guilty,’ and those that are in favor of Mr. Talbot will vote ‘ not guilty.’ The ballots are all there.”

“ I wish to say before we vote,” Miss Skinner remarks in her most oratorical and oracular manner, “ that it is well to remember that this is the first case that has ever been tried in America before a jury of women, and that it is well to remember that the whole future of American women may be influenced by the way in which we vote. If we give a vote for the man, it will show that we are not narrow-minded, but that we are liberal enough to side with the right, even when it is in favor of one who has been an enemy of woman suffrage.”

“ Has this man Talbot been against woman suffrage ? ” is demanded, amid evident excitement.

“ Yes, he has written against it in the ‘ Squabtown Whoopowl.’ ”

“ Then that settles it,” one woman declares ; “ I will never vote in favor of a man that has wished to keep our sex on the level of idiots, criminals, and minors, by depriving us of the ballot.”

This remark is received with what might most accurately, were it not for the want of deference to

the sex implied by the use of the term, be called a cackle of excited determination.

“ For my part,” Miss Sharp rises to remark, “ while I agree with what Miss Skinner says in regard to the importance of what we decide to do, I look at the matter from exactly the opposite point of view in regard to the verdict. What is the reason that women have been so long trampled under the feet of men, if it is not that they have not held together? It is all very well to talk of being broad enough to give a verdict in favor of a man ; the verdicts always are in favor of men, and if we do not show that we are prepared to stand by our sex, how can women trust their cause to our hands? We are here to represent the strength of Womanhood. All over the East they are watching us, and the Eastern papers say that they are waiting to judge by the results in the West whether it is worth while to try woman suffrage or not. What will they say if the first woman jury in the country goes back on woman? ”

The effect of this oration is manifestly so great that Miss Skinner is forced to see that she is again in the minority. She takes revenge in a characteristically feminine way.

“ Excuse me, Miss Sharp,” she says sweetly, “ but your front is coming off.”

Miss Sharp clutches her front hair with frantic haste, and retires from the discussion to consult with her pocket mirror in a corner. Her triumphant enemy, who has thus snatched victory in

the very moment of defeat, turns upon the company a smiling glance which seems to intimate that of course they are convinced of the justice of her position now; and such is feminine nature that for the most part they are!

"Oh, ladies," cries out the plaintive voice of Mrs. Small, "won't you please to vote so that I can go home? My baby is sick, and I am so worried that I don't know what to do."

"Yes," Mrs. Jones observes, "we may as well vote now as any time. Those that have made up their minds will keep to 'em, no matter what you say or what the evidence is, and those that have n't will vote one time as well as another."

This is not a soothing speech, but the fat and placid Mrs. Jones is so perfectly unmoved by the disapproving glances cast in her direction that it is felt by the others that all remonstrances would be wasted, so that nobody responds.

"We will vote now," Mrs. Dingly says with dignity. "Please select your votes."

"There are not enough votes here," somebody declares.

"That is because they have been used up since we came into the room," the forewoman declares, fixing her stern glance on the culprits whose pockets are filled with dirty pieces of cardboard on which are written receipts for various and sundry kinds of cake.

"Well, we can't vote without more cards."

“We shall have to call the sheriff again.”

“I am not going to call that horrid man again,”
Mrs. Dingley declares with spirit.

Nobody knows exactly what reply to make to this, and a pause ensues which is broken by an unexpected move on the part of Mrs. Dyer.

“I am going home,” she declares, rising. “I am just sick of staying here, and I never will be on a jury again in my life. I don’t know anything about their old case, and what’s more, I don’t want to. I am tired to death, and I am just going home.”

“Why, you can’t go! The sheriff won’t let you out.”

“I should like to see him touch me. My husband would just tear him to pieces if he laid a hand on me!”

“But he has to keep you here. It’s the law.”

“I don’t care anything about the law. I resign from this old jury, and that is the whole of it. If I’m not a member of it, the sheriff has n’t any right to keep me shut up here as if I were a prisoner myself. It is shameful, and I shall tell my husband just as soon as I get home.”

Emboldened by this example, Mrs. Small rises also and begins to settle her bonnet.

“I’ll resign too,” she says. “I must go home and see to my sick baby.”

“But you can’t resign!” cries Miss Skinner in wrath and consternation. “Nobody can resign from a jury.”

"Then what was I put on it for?" demands Mrs. Dyer, standing at bay. "I thought it was going to be splendid. You always said it would be when you lectured. I can't stay here, and if they will let me go I will promise never to vote again. My husband said I should n't like it, and I don't! I don't!"

The rising inflection of her voice and the appearance of her countenance sufficiently warn those about her that it is only a step to hysterics, and great is their consternation.

"I say," cries Mrs. Fritz, "we shall never agree on anything at this rate. Why not draw lots to see which way the verdict shall be?"

"I cannot betray the trust of the State," a sentimental-looking juror responds, shaking her auburn curls with an expression of being prepared to die for principle.

"For my part," another observes in quite a different spirit, "I will vote for anything if I can only be allowed to go home."

Meanwhile Mrs. Dyer and Mrs. Small, after consulting together, are seen to be advancing to the door, upon which the former raps vigorously. The sheriff appears with great promptness, and the other jurors wait with bated breath while the following colloquy takes place between him and the would-be seceders.

"What do you want now, ladies? Verdict ready?"

"We are going home," Mrs. Dyer announces sweetly. "We have resigned from the jury."

"Resigned? Great Scott! Resigned! Thunder and Mars!"

The sheriff bursts into wild and undignified laughter, which becomes so violent that there seems to be imminent danger that he will in the end burst a bloodvessel.

"Resigned! Jupiter gee-wilkins! You can't resign from a jury."

Mrs. Dyer shrinks back; but Mrs. Small, the color rising in her cheeks, attempts to pass the sheriff.

"I am going to my sick baby," she says. "Will you stand out of my way, sir?"

The awful dignity of her manner sobers the sheriff, who closes the door and puts his back against it.

"Look here, ladies," he says; "Lord knows, I'd like to send you all home. It's always been my belief that women had no business round a court of justice, nohow; but you've been impanelled, and I have n't any right to let you go. You've got to give in a verdict, or stay here long enough to show that there ain't no possible chance of your agreeing, before you'll be discharged."

At this awful statement Mrs. Dyer bursts into hysterical weeping, whereupon the sheriff at first makes a motion as if he were minded to attempt consolation, but he evidently thinks better of it, and goes out. The women gather in a discouraged

fashion about the weeping woman, while Mrs. Small, whose meekness has given way to anger, delivers herself of an opinion of the sheriff which is at once so uncomplimentary and so obviously undeserved that it is not worth while to set it down.

“For my part,” cries Mrs. Fairly, “I think it is just shameful to shut us up here and not let us out! I should think that they would be ashamed of themselves! I should think that every woman in the land would rebel against such an indignity! I should like to know how they think we can tell anything about the law if we stay here for a week.”

The situation is becoming tragic, and there is no telling to what pitch of desperation the company might have come, when some ten minutes later the sheriff, who has been in consultation with the judge, returns with the welcome news that his Honor is willing to accept a plea of disagreement, and to allow the jury to be discharged; and thus it comes about that the first woman jury of the State does not in the end declare for either the man or for the woman in the case.

But among the lawyers of that part of the world it is held to be a fact not to be disputed that whatever is the second best story in the world, the best is certainly the account which is given by the sheriff of his dealings with the female jury.



Tale the Ninth.



MISS JANE.

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MISS JANE.

HE lived in a square house with a gambrel roof, which stood less than a score of feet from the village street. Tall and attenuated hackmatack-trees grew in the tiny front yard, hardly larger than a pocket-handkerchief, and managed among them, by great thriftiness and ingenuity, to keep the place so shaded that a fine green moss had spread itself over the stems of the lilacs and over the somewhat dilapidated fence which enclosed them. They were the most spidery and ghostly of trees; and their tops were at least twice as far from the ground as was the roof of the house they overtopped.

The house was not one of much pretence. It was a two-story, substantial building, and there had even in the beginning been some adornment in the way of carved pilaster flanking the front door, and in the elaborate leading of the fan-light above. But time had so chipped the carving and gnawed with rest-

less teeth at its edges, it had so flaked off the paint and had with the aid of the wind so bent and warped the old fan-light, that the glory of these things was no more. The house was still in a state of preservation sufficient to bring it within the bounds of respectability, but it had no longer any faintest pretence of elegance, whatever may in the beginning have been its state.

The windows of the old house were small greenish panes, and it may have been that the terrible squint which was so marked in Jane was the result of constant attempts to peer through them and between the branches of the lilacs at what passed in the village street,—only that there was so little ever passing in the village street that this theory does not, upon reflection, seem tenable.

Within, the mansion was quaint and crooked, and, above everything else, it was narrow. The furniture was plain but stately, and with a fine air of having been in existence so long that it had come to be something more than mere furniture, being endowed with some of the characteristics of the folk with whom it had so long associated. The tall clock which had ticked away the lives of Miss Jane's ancestors for three or four generations was too big to stand in the tiny hall, and had to be given

a corner in the sitting-room, that good old-time apartment which has vanished with the advance of civilization. The green silk which lined the doors of the ancient secretary was almost white with age along its folds, while the brasses were dull with time, and despite all polishing could not be rubbed into the vulgarity of appearing new. There were chairs covered with such chintz as has not been in the shops since the days of our grandmothers, and which apparently will not be again this side of the Judgment Day. The books on the spider-legged old tables were published when the century was young, if indeed they were not brought into being in a century dead before this one was born. All about the house was the air of survival, and of belonging to a time long since gone.

It was perhaps because she grew up in this atmosphere that Miss Jane had always the air of being old. When she trudged to school in pinny-fores she might at any moment have been mistaken for her own grandmother, and the danger of regarding her as a contemporary of her own furniture grew greater as she advanced in life. She was a queer little fair-haired thing, with a curious squint, a sallow cheek, and a strangely uncanny nervous motion of the chin. She threw her chin up

as she talked or as she sat silent, moving her lower jaw like a nervous colt which tries to get rid of its bridle. It was an inheritance from her mother, a kind-hearted and amiable old lady who had the forbidding appearance of the typical witch in story.

Miss Jane had, properly speaking, never been young, since she had been born with maturity of mind no less than of person. She was rather a humorous body, but there had never been anything at all resembling childishness about her. She was born a hundred years old, and that of course made a difference.

The store of worldly goods of which Miss Jane was possessed was small. There was a trifling income from some property which her father had left, and when there is no outgo to speak of, a very little income will do. After the death of her mother Jane took to going out to do sewing for the few families in the village who were in a position to indulge in the luxury of a seamstress. It was partly that she needed the money and quite as much that she needed the companionship. She could not bear the thought of sitting day after day alone in the empty house, and she was not of sufficient versatility to run from one neighbor's to another's after the fashion of the gossips.

It was in the line of her professional work that Miss Jane's romance happened, and that she came to be the topic of conversation for the whole village for a time. She was, moreover, made a person of consequence in the eyes of her fellows, and that is a thing which the feminine soul dearly loves.

There was a great stir at the house of 'Squire Turnbull, and all the domestic atmosphere was in commotion. The 'Squire's nephew, his pride, his pet, and his heir, was coming to visit him. In that mysterious way in which intelligence is diffused in a village where there is nothing to interest folk save the intimate affairs of their neighbors, it was known that there had been serious difficulties between Archie Turnbull and his uncle, and that this visit was quite as much for the arrangement of terms as of a friendly nature. Nobody knew just what Archie had been doing this time, and indeed the derelictions of Archie were of so terrible a nature that the good village folk were only in the habit of alluding to them in a sort of awe-stricken whisper as being quite beyond the range of their simple and unsophisticated imaginations. He was known to smoke, while the 'Squire had wine on his own table, so that it was not surprising that the young fellow

should be so abandoned as to drink it. He had been to Paris, and to visit that city in any capacity other than that of a missionary must always seem to the good villagers as something not far removed from a crime. He was supposed to have been initiated into all sorts of vices, and cards and wine and tobacco were as familiar to him as possible; there was certainly no doubt about that.

And yet withal Archie was an enticing youth. There was not a man, woman, or child in the village who did not secretly admire him. He was the rural ideal of manly beauty, if not of virtue; the type of politeness, if not of propriety. On those rare and fleeting occasions when he condescended to honor the village with his presence he was the all-absorbing topic of thought and of conversation. His looks were commented upon; his saucy, easy impudence was viewed with secret admiration and expressed disapproval. The young men of the village studied his attire, while the young damsels studied his face and figure. His most trifling remarks were quoted and remembered. He became for the time being the village oracle, while yet he set at defiance all the village traditions and outraged all the village customs. When he was seen openly sauntering along

in the direction of a trout-brook on Sunday morning with his rod, lifting his hat to the church-goers whom he met with as easy an air as if it were any other of the seven days in the week instead of the first, there was a flutter in the village conscience which must have seriously interfered with the reception of such divine truth as that morning was announced from the village pulpit.

He read French novels, he drove fast horses, he smoked cigars and cigarettes, and whatever he did he did with the unconscious air of one for whom the conventions of village morality did not exist. It was evident that he either did not in the least care what the villagers thought of his morals, or that he was so indifferent to the whole moral question that he had never taken the trouble to find out what they did think.

On this particular visit the 'Squire had ranged himself to some extent upon the side of the village moralists. He had, heretofore, taken much the same view of the matter as did his irrepressible nephew; or to be more exact, he had assumed that whatever Archie did was outside the province of the moral rules of the village. Now he had come to the place where he disapproved so strongly of certain things which Archie had done that

he was almost forced into the position of disapproval which the villagers had so long held. The truth was that Archie had been carrying out the theory which had ruled his life, and which had not a little encouragement from his uncle's indulgence, that he was a law unto himself; and the particular scandal into which he had got himself was one which chanced to touch the 'Squire in a particularly delicate spot.

The 'Squire had not sent for Archie to come to him without having in his mind a scheme which he intended to propose to the lad. He stood in place of father and mother to the young man, and Archie was wholly dependent on him for money, so that the 'Squire might be excused for feeling that he had a right to speak in this crisis. He had made up his stupid old mind that the thing for Archie to do, and the only thing which could save his nephew from destruction, was for the scamp to marry. All his life the 'Squire had heard the phrase, "marry and settle down," until he had come to regard the two things as inseparable, and to feel that the man who married was thereby settled down, whatever might be his natural disinclination to that result. He sent for Archie to come to him, and he made up

his mind that this time he would not be beguiled. He would not allow the graceless young scamp to disarm his anger as he had so often done. He would be firm and unwavering, and there should be no backing down from the decision he had reached. Archie was plainly going to the dogs, and he must see to it that a catastrophe was prevented.

When Archie arrived and the 'Squire presented to him his scheme, the young reprobate received the proposition with shouts of laughter, which was the worst thing he could have done, since he thereby touched his uncle's vanity and made him indignant personally as well as in the interests of the highest morality. The irate gentleman was brought to the point of informing the scapegrace who jeered at him that not one penny more should the latter receive from him until he was engaged to be married; and to this determination he stuck with a decision which was so new that Archie became at last filled with consternation, wondering to what length this bothering thing would go.

It was not unnatural that the young gentleman should be bothered. He had a lot of debts to pay, and he had plans for the rest of the summer which it needed con-

siderable money to carry out. He had no resource outside of his uncle; and if the old gentleman persisted in this whimsical and vexatious notion, Archie did not see just how the remainder of the season could prove anything but extremely unpleasant to him. There were higher and harder words between uncle and nephew than there had ever been before; and every syllable which was said on either side confirmed the old 'Squire in the belief that he must be firm, since upon him the whole of Archie's future depended.

It was only natural that Archie, spoiled as he was, should be much vexed over the whole affair. He had been annoyed enough at the scandal which led to this quarrel; and now that he was cut off from supplies and forced to sulk in the attitude of a culprit, his naturally easy temper was more ruffled than it had ever been in the whole course of his existence before. He brooded upon the situation until the morning when Miss Jane came to hem the new muslin curtains for the parlor, and then he had a bright idea.

He came down to his breakfast at the hour which in itself was regarded by the villagers, all duly informed concerning it, as of repre-

hensible lateness, and after the meal was disposed of, he sauntered out on to the piazza where Miss Jane sat sewing.

In the village there was nothing in the fact that Miss Jane went out sewing to interfere with her social standing; and indeed, since it was known that it was not absolutely necessary that she should do it, it conferred upon her a certain distinction. She was looked upon as if she were a person of so much leisure that she could go visiting day after day, and the mere fact that her visits were paid for did not detract from her social rank.

Miss Jane greeted Archie with perfect coolness, and with a certain air of dry disapproval which amused him. He stretched himself luxuriantly in the hammock which was in itself an article of sufficient rarity in the village, and lay there watching her as she sewed in the warm June forenoon.

"How tired you must get of sticking that needle in and pulling it out again," he observed at length.

"Not half so tired as you must get of doing nothing," she retorted.

Archie smiled and regarded her closely.

Miss Jane was not a beauty, and neither her squint nor her habit of twitching her

chin had any tendency to make her more fascinating. She was half-a-dozen years older than Archie, and she had nothing in her appearance to contradict an assertion that she was ten years his senior. Archie looked at her from his hammock, amused at her crispness, and then it was that he had an idea. So forcibly did it strike him that he almost called out in glee; but he was able so far to control his emotions as to confine himself to a laugh which was too musical not to be delightful.

"You are severe on me," he said, beginning with unusual promptness to put into execution at once his suddenly formed scheme. "This is my vacation, you know."

"I should think you would need it," Miss Jane sniffed, sewing more swiftly.

Archie laughed more than ever.

"You folk down here all seem to think that I am an idle good-for-naught," he said. Then with a quick change of tone that would not have done discredit to an actor of standing, he added: "But then I never had a mother or a father to set me going straight. A boy isn't good for much until a woman takes him in hand."

"That is so," Miss Jane assented briskly.
"You should marry."

"When I marry," Archie answered, "I must have a wife with a steady head and a clear one, so that there shall be one in the family."

Miss Jane laughed, but with evident approval of the sentiment.

"You will probably take some silly little chit who is pretty, but who never had an idea in her head," she returned.

"No," Archie said with emphasis. "You do not do me justice, Miss Jane. I have knocked about a good deal —"

"So I have understood," she interpolated disapprovingly.

"And I am older in my judgment than I get credit for being," he went on, ignoring the interruption. "I know what I need as well as anybody does."

In commenting upon this conversation the next day to her friend Hannah Quincy, Miss Jane owned that she was a good deal struck by it, and she added that when Archie had gone on to ask her advice in certain matters she had given it with a conviction that she might be doing the young man a real service. The gossips of the little town were of course soon put in full possession of all this information by Hannah Quincy, with the addition of much more from the imagination of

that lady; while it was not long before all the village were talking of the amazing intimacy which had sprung up between Miss Jane and Archie Turnbull. He had called at the old house under the hackmatacks more than once, he had been seen walking home with her from more than one of the houses where she was employed, and there was a general emulation among the good ladies of the town to secure the services of the seamstress for the sake of seeing whether the young man did really come to escort her home at night, as was reported.

It is not to be pretended that all this did not to some extent turn the simple head of Miss Jane. To be the centre of village gossip; to have risen to the dignity of being associated in the minds of her contemporaries with the village favorite was more honor than she had ever aspired to or expected. She was flattered and excited, and her chin worked more than ever as she caught her neighbors watching her with curious eyes.

As for Archie, he was not only carrying out his scheme, but he was amusing himself as well. He had never found any adventure of his life more droll. Miss Jane was not without plenty of natural shrewdness which

made her good company, and she was not in the least sentimental, so that he was able to carry on the farce of wooing her without any disagreeable necessity of amorous pretence. The whole town knew how often he walked with Miss Jane and how often he talked with Miss Jane, and indeed it was part of his plan that they should know. He was intentionally giving a sort of publicity to the whole affair with the intent that it should come to the ears of his uncle; and in time to the ears of his uncle it did come.

Naturally the 'Squire at first treated the whole story with contempt, and laughed mightily at the idea that his nephew should be paying attentions to plain and elderly Miss Jane; but when Archie began to take the seamstress out driving, and was seen walking with her in the moonlight, then the 'Squire lost his head a little, and began to think that there was perhaps something in it.

"Archie," he said one morning, after revolving the situation in his mind, "I hope you are not going to waste your whole summer dawdling about when you should be looking for a wife. I mean just what I have said, and—"

"And I have made up my mind to obey

you, sir," responded Archie, secretly delighted.

"Then why don't you set about finding the right girl? You can't find one in a moment."

"Oh, the girl doesn't matter," was Archie's careless answer. "I don't want to marry at all; but if I must marry, one girl is as good as another."

"But one girl is not as good as another, you young scapegrace!" his uncle responded, beginning to get red in the face. "You must remember that you have to consider your family."

"Oh, of course. I shouldn't think of marrying a girl that is not respectable, and I shall try to get one who comes of a good family. You don't ask any more, do you?"

The 'Squire was inwardly raging; but Miss Jane's family was every whit as good as his own, and he knew it, so that it manifestly was of no use to continue the attack on that line.

"But you wouldn't want a wife who was a frump," he said angrily, "or one that squinted, or had any deformity."

"Oh, that is a matter of taste," Archie responded with a great affectation of indifference. "If she is good, it is enough."

"Since when did you come to have so great an admiration for virtue?" his uncle sneered angrily.

"Since I have been confined down here in the country," Archie answered significantly, "the power of virtue has become impressed upon my mind. As for beauty, that is, after all, a matter of taste. I don't think I mind a little squint in a woman; it does n't look so set as the regular thing, you know."

"You are a rascal!" his uncle roared, losing his temper completely; and he flung himself out of the breakfast-room, leaving Archie to smile to himself over the success of his tactics.

The success was not quite so rapid as the young scapegrace hoped, however. His uncle was angry, but he did not give way, even after Archie had had the hardihood to parade Miss Jane before the 'Squire's very face on his arm at a tennis tournament. He made no proposition to pay his nephew's debts, and as his creditors were becoming more and more pressing, Archie was forced to play his last card and actually ask Miss Jane to marry him.

Miss Jane was a shrewd little body, and Archie had not talked to her about his dif-

ficulties for nothing. She understood the young fellow perhaps better than he did himself, and it is certain that she would have made him a far better wife than he was in the ordinary course of things likely to pick up. She was a little flattered that he should have chosen her as his confidant; and being a woman, she enjoyed his gallantries while she yet knew perfectly well that they were worth nothing whatever.

"You are not in earnest," she said, when he asked her to marry him.

"Not in earnest?" he repeated, rather embarrassed at the turn things had taken. "Do you think that I do not mean what I say?"

"I should be sorry to think that a Turnbull descended to say anything that he did not mean," Miss Jane responded with gentle severity.

Archie blushed, and wished himself a thousand miles away; but when one has asked a woman to marry him, he cannot gracefully retreat until she has at least given him some sort of an answer.

"But you do not answer me," he said meekly.

"Oh, I will answer you," she said. "I would n't marry you for anything you could mention."

"Not marry me," Archie echoed, rather aghast at the presentation of the fact that there was a woman in the village who would not jump at the chance to marry his royal self.

"And I am not fond of being made a cat's paw, either," Miss Jane continued, working her chin in her nervousness, and squinting frightfully.

Young Turnbull began to have a strong suspicion that when he undertook to trick his uncle by a sham of being engaged to an undesirable person he had made a mistake in his selection of the person. He had never in his whole life had so awkward a moment, and never had he felt so small. He stammered something, — he could not have told what it was; and to it Miss Jane made no pretext of paying any attention whatever.

"Am I to understand that you really wish to make me your wife?" Miss Jane asked, with an awful clearness of utterance which made the cold chills run down Archie's backbone.

"If not, why should I have asked you to marry me?" he returned with weak evasiveness.

"You do me the honor of supposing me to be a fool," Miss Jane said succinctly.

"I beg your pardon," he said falteringly.
"I —"

"You had better beg my pardon. Does it strike you as a manly thing, Mr. Turnbull, to make a plaything of a woman in this way? Many a girl might have taken you in earnest and not seen your game at all. You might have destroyed the peace of her whole life. How did you know that I was not as sentimental or as trusting as any one?"

"I was sure —" began poor Archie; but she interrupted him fiercely.

"Bah!" she cried. "You were sure of nothing but that this was a way to deceive your uncle. You did not do me the honor to give a single thought to what I might or might not feel. You were so absorbed in yourself that you had not a thought to spare for me."

"But I assure you," Archie broke in, almost beside himself, and feeling as if he were being horsewhipped in the public street by a woman, "that —"

"You will assure me, perhaps," Miss Jane interrupted him again, "that you were honest with me, and that you had no intention of deceiving the 'Squire. Bah! You are a nice fellow! You must be proud of yourself. After all that he has done for you, and after

the way in which you have repaid him, to think of playing this sneaking trick on him! You might have spared him, if you had no compunction on me."

Miss Jane's blood was up, and for once in her life she indulged herself in the luxury of saying exactly what she thought and all she thought. Her victim writhed in his chair like an unfortunate beetle on a pin, but there was no escape from the piercing glance of her squinting eyes. He had never in his whole life before been in a position where he was treated as a culprit who could and must be judged by the same laws as those which governed the conduct of ordinary mortals. He was accustomed to be regarded as one in whose favor there were always innumerable exceptions to be made; and the sensation of being classed in with vulgar and indefensible offenders was as disagreeable as it was novel.

"Really, Miss Jane," he remarked, with a desperate attempt to rally his scattered dignity, "I must say that it seems to me that you are taking an extraordinary tone with me. When one asks a lady to become his wife, he at least expects that she will answer him kindly."

"That depends," Miss Jane responded, nodding her head significantly. "Well, you

shall be answered kindly. I accept your offer. We will be married in a month. You had better tell your uncle to-night. He may not like the match; and as there is n't any too much time for him to get reconciled to it in, he had better know as soon as possible."

Poor Archie sat staring at her like one bereft of reason. If he had been disconcerted by her previous remarks, this announcement completed his demoralization.

"But, Miss Jane," he began, "a month—"

"Oh, of course, you would prefer to make it a week," she interrupted. "I understand the natural impatience of the young lover; but really I cannot think of having less than a month to get ready in. I think it will be pleasant to go abroad for our wedding-trip, Archie; don't you agree with me? I have always wanted to see Europe."

The young man stared at her with glassy eyes.

"But you said you would not marry me for anything," he managed to stammer.

"A woman's no always means yes," she answered gayly. "Besides, I do not marry you for anything. I marry you for nothing."

The pleasantry struck Archie as being as completely out of place as a jest at a funeral. He sat in silence for a few moments, and all the

time there was in his head the strangest mixture of chagrin, desire to get out of this scrape, admiration for Miss Jane, and withal a dawning of more manly feelings. A healthful shame of what he was and what he had done rose in him as he sat there with his eyes cast down, and tried to collect his thoughts.

He raised his head at length, and looked up to meet the eyes of Miss Jane, who was regarding him closely.

"Miss Jane," he said, "I beg your pardon with all my heart. I have been a blackguard, and I see it. I can do nothing but beg you to forgive me."

"I forgive you," she said, rather more brusquely than he expected after he had humbled himself to this extent. "Do you find it so easy to forgive yourself?"

The color flushed into his face. Miss Jane was doing her work thoroughly and pitilessly now that she had got to it.

"No," he answered humbly; "that is not so easy."

Again they fell into silence, and for full half an hour they sat there in the gathering twilight without speaking. Miss Jane never showed more discretion than when she allowed this silence to flow unbroken. She realized instinctively that Archie was think-

ing as he had never thought before in all his careless young life, and that if there were any salvation for him it perhaps lay in this hour.

"Miss Jane," he said at last, "you have done me a greater service than I can tell you. Thank you, and good-bye."

He rose and held out his hand, and she gave him hers without other word than good-bye. It must be confessed that she was filled with a feminine curiosity to know what he was intending to do, but she wisely forbore to ask. She did hope that sometime she should know what he had thought during all that long silence, but she was capable of holding her tongue at the right time and she did not ask. Her chin twitched energetically after he had left her; and for a day or two she was absent-minded, but after that she settled down to the old routine. She knew somehow that Archie had left the village, but beyond that nobody seemed to have any information, and Miss Jane was more than once questioned in regard to the young man by those who felt that she might know something in regard to his sudden departure. There was a suspicion that Miss Jane might be afflicted at his desertion which kept many silent, so that she was not in general greatly troubled, and for more than a week she had no news.

At the end of that time she had a letter from Archie. It was written from the city where he had gone to begin work, despite the fact that it was midsummer. He had made a clean breast of the whole matter to his uncle, and had promised to go to work for the first time in his life if his debts were but paid; and the old 'Squire, being wise enough to recognize the fact that this was not a time to cavil or to stick to the strict letter of his declaration, had said not a word of blame or reproach, but had put the young man in the way of setting to work at once.

"I hate it desperately," Arthur wrote, "but I am working to make a man of myself, and one that you shall not be ashamed of, Miss Jane."

The villagers have never been able yet to discover what happened between Miss Jane and Archie Turnbull. The friendship which had existed between her and both Archie and the old 'Squire seems to contradict the theory that she was made the victim of the young man's flirtations; while the respect in which she is held by the 'Squire, who is accustomed to speak of her as the most sensible woman he knows, has given her a new prestige in the village. Archie is turning into a steady and really good fellow; and when he comes

down to see his uncle on his vacations, he is not long in finding his way to the house under the tall hackmatack-trees.

"It is proper that I should come to see you at once," he is accustomed to say, jestingly, "for I suppose that the truth is that we are really engaged."

"Of course," Miss Jane answers; "but that only means that I have the right to interfere if I do not approve of the woman you really mean at any time to marry."

Interlude Fifth.



A READING-LESSON.



A READING-LESSON.

IT is a beautiful July morning, and on the piazza of a seaside cottage sits Mrs. Marmaduke with her six-year-old son Harold. The water in the bay is sparkling and dancing, and not a few yachts are gliding to and fro over the blue surface of the bay. Mrs. Marmaduke wears an expression of great determination, and in her hand is a reading book of elementary type. Harold is seated at her side in a low chair, and wears upon his face that serene expression which can only belong to a child who has the world at his feet, because for him no world exists which he cannot conquer.

“ You know,” Mrs. Marmaduke says, in tones of dulcet softness which at once induce in the experienced ears of her son the idea that she is about to ask him to do something which he will not wish to do, “ that if you are to keep up with your class after being out so much while you were sick last winter, you will have to read with me mornings this summer. I am willing to give you my time to help you, and — ”

“Oh, you need n’t, mamma,” Harold interrupts with great self-denial. “I don’t want to take up your time.”

“But you don’t want to fall back into the class with the little ones, do you?”

“No, mamma, but I can get along somehow. I am too old to go back with the little ones.”

“Age does n’t have anything to do with it, Harold. It will depend upon what you know.”

This view of the case seems to make an impression upon the boy, since for a moment he is silent, and his mother supposes that he is pondering upon the matter; but he suddenly breaks out with the entirely irrelevant question,—

“Mamma, why don’t they have Fourth of July every month?”

“I will tell you all about that some other time, dear. Now, you know, we are to have a lesson.”

She opens the book with an air of determination so stern that the boy quails before it; but he is not yet subdued.

“But, mamma, I would like to know about it now.”

“Some other time, Harold. Now I want you to read.”

Harold heaves a profound sigh, and fixes his eyes upon the book as if it were a curious thing of which he does not in the least suspect the use.

“I think you read the first of this before you left school, Harold; but we will begin at the begin-

ning just the same. This is a story about Dime and Betty. Dime is the dog, and Betty is the cow."

"Oh, mamma, Teddy Frost is going to call his new dog Frost-fish. Don't you think that that is a funny name?"

"Yes, dear; but we will pay attention to this now."

"Why do you say 'pay attention,' mamma? Attention is n't the same thing as money."

"Never mind that, Harold. Now I want you to read. Spell the first word."

"B-o— Oh, mamma, do look at that funny boat out there. It is almost alike at both ends."

"If you look at the boats, Harold dear, we shall have to go into the house for our lesson. I think it is pleasanter out here; don't you?"

"But I can't help seeing things, mamma, can I?"

"If you will look at your book, you won't see what is out in the harbor."

"Dear me, I wish nobody had ever found out that there was such a thing as reading."

"Then there would have been no fairy stories written for me to read to you."

"Then you could have made them up, and that would have done just as well."

"But everybody does not think so, Harold. What would other folk have done?"

"Oh, I don't care about them," observes Master Harold, with the brutally frank selfishness of childhood. "Anyway, I don't want to read."

"Then don't waste any time fretting about it, but read at once and get through with it. That is the simplest thing to do."

"B-o-w. What does that spell, mamma?"

"I will tell you those two first words because they are not words that we have very often. That is 'bow-wow!' Now you go on and read the rest."

"D-o ; d-o —"

"Give the sounds of the letters, and then you can tell what the word is."

"Uddd, uddd —"

"Not 'udd,' darling ; but 'ddd.'"

"Uddd —"

"Ddd-oo —"

"Udd-doo."

"No, dear," Mrs. Marmaduke says, with a sigh which seems wrung from her very soul. "The word is 'do.' Dd-oo, do."

Harold regards the word with an air of unaffected but purely impersonal curiosity.

"Do you think I'll be able to read as well as you do, mamma, in a week?"

"Hardly in a week, I should say, at the present rate of progress," the mother answers with a smile.

"What does that mean, mamma?"

"What does what mean?"

"What you said : 'presents eight' —"

"Present rate of progress means the rate at

which we are getting on. It means that if you do not learn faster than you are learning now, you won't be able to read for a long, long time."

"Well, I'm going to learn very fast now. D-o, Dime—"

"D-o, do—"

"Oh, yes; do y-y-o-y-o—"

"Y-o-u, you."

"You."

"Do you— Well, go on."

"S-e-s-e-s-e-e—"

"Sound the letters."

"Sssssssss—"

"Well, put the 'e' on."

"E."

"What does that mean?"

"Sssss-e."

"Well?"

"Oh, mamma, can't I have a recess now? Our teacher always lets us have a recess when we are tired."

"But, Harold, you have read only one word, and that I told you. If you have a recess after each word, how soon do you think we should get through the book?"

"But I'm tired so that I can't think. Besides, I want a drink dreadfully."

"If I let you go and get a drink, will you come back directly?"

“Yes, mamma ; and may I have a piece of gingerbread too?”

“Why, Harold, it is n’t half an hour since we left the breakfast-table.”

“But I’m awfully hungry, mamma.”

Mrs. Marmaduke heaves a sigh of profound anguish, but she weakly gives her consent to the gingerbread, and Harold whisks away with a celerity which is a marked contrast with the languor of his previous motions. The mother looks out over the sunny bay, and makes an attempt at a sort of mental calculation of the time and effort it is likely to take to teach her son to read all the words in the book if it takes an entire morning to master a single one. She sits for some time, and falls into a reverie wherein there is a good deal of speculation upon the question of what is the proper method of educating children and of imposing upon their savage natures the entirely arbitrary discipline of civilization. The question is one of so much profundity that she is unable to come to any solution whatever, although she so completely loses herself in the reflection that she is not aware of the passage of time until fifteen minutes or so have passed. Then she begins to wonder what has become of her son ; and at the end of ten minutes more she decides that it would be a good plan to go after him.

Just as she rises to go to look for him he comes running around the house after his dog, which is

carrying in his mouth a stick to which is tied a streamer of red cloth.

“Oh, mamma,” he cries, utterly ignoring the whole subject of lessons and all previous complications of the educational sort, “do see Fido run with the flag.”

“Harold,” his mother says in a tone so severe that he is suddenly arrested in his play, “do you think I can let you go for a drink and a lunch again, if this is the way you do when you are trusted?”

“But, mamma, I was coming just as fast as I could run.”

“But what about Fido?”

“He was only just running ahead of me.”

“And did it take you a whole half-hour to get a drink?”

“You said I might have a piece of gingerbread, and you always told me to eat slow.”

“Say ‘slowly,’ Harold, and not ‘slow.’”

“To eat slowly.”

“But it did not take you half an hour to eat a piece of gingerbread.”

“But — ”

“Never mind about it now,” Mrs. Marmaduke remarks with another sigh. “We must go on with the lesson before the whole morning is gone. I have letters to write for the noon mail, and I shall not have time if we do not hurry.”

“But, mamma, why don’t you write your letters first, and let me read afterward?”

"Harold, stop talking and asking questions and read. The first word is 'Bow-wow ;' and after that you had read 'do.' Now go on."

"I had read two words, mamma ; but I have forgotten what the second word is."

"Do you,' then."

"Do you," reads Harold in a confident manner, "s-e-e — "

"See."

"See m-e. What does 'm-e' spell, mamma?"

"Sound the letters, Harold."

"Nnn — "

"Not 'nnnn,' but 'mmm.' "

"Mmmm-e, mmm-eeee."

"Well, what does that make?"

"Can."

"Does 'can' begin with 'mmmm'?"

"Oh, it is 'what.' "

"No, no, Harold ; 'mmm-eee, me.' "

"Me. Can you see me."

"Not 'can you see me?'"

"Do you see me?" Mamma, can you see anybody through glass that is a mile thick?"

"Don't ask such questions now, Harold. Pay attention to the lesson. Go on with the next word."

"But, mamma, just tell me this one question and I won't ask any more. Can you see anybody through glass if it is a mile thick?"

"No, of course you could n't."

"Not if the glass was perfectly clear?"

"Oh, I don't know how thick glass would have to be before you could n't see through it."

"You could n't see anybody a mile off anyway, could you?"

An awful expression of despairing sternness came over the face of Mrs. Marmaduke.

"Harold," she says with firmness, "if you do not pay attention to your lesson, I shall not let you go out to play all this afternoon. You should have read the whole page in this time, and you have not got through the first line."

"Oh, have I got to read the whole page, mamma? Oh, I don't want to read so much as that."

"It looks, Harold," his mother answers with an attempt at evasive intimidation, "as if you would be sent to bed before you got through another line."

"Oh, I don't want to go to bed. I'll read; I will truly, if you won't send me to bed."

"Very well, then go on and read."

"Do you see me? I — ' Didn't I read that well, mamma? "

"Very well. Go on."

"A-m, was."

"Am."

"I was am — "

"No, no. Not 'was am,' but 'I am.' "

"I am the — ' That word I knew. 'I am the — ' Oh, mamma, that word is too long for me to read. Just tell me that word."

“ That word is ‘ little.’ ”

“ I am the little d-d-d-o-o-d-o — ”

“ What is the last letter? ”

“ Q.”

“ No ; it is ‘ g.’ ”

“ G. D-o-g, cow.”

“ Why, Harold, you know what that spells.
What made you say ‘ cow ’? ”

“ There is a cow in the picture, anyway.”

“ There is something else too.”

“ Oh, there is a man.”

“ ‘ D-o-g ’ does not spell ‘ man ’ ; what else is
there? ”

“ Oh, I know ; it is ‘ dog.’ ‘ I am the little dog.’
Did n’t I read that well? ”

“ Very well ; but that is n’t the end of the
sentence. What is the other word? ”

“ That is a long word, mamma, and if you have
letters to write I wish you would tell me just for
this once, so that we can get through.”

“ That is the dog’s name, Dime.”

“ Robby Davis has a dog, and its name is Curly.
Is n’t that a funny name, mamma? ”

“ What has that to do with the reading-lesson,
Harold? ”

“ I think I might have a recess now, anyway.”

“ Why should you have a recess when you have
just got back from being gone half an hour? ”

“ This is vacation, anyhow, and nobody has les-
sons in vacation.”

“But you have n’t had lessons for six months.”

“Well, I was sick anyway. Don’t you think I was good when I was sick?”

“Yes, you were good most of the time.”

“When Tommy Trask was sick, he was so cross that they could n’t do anything with him. His nurse told Hannah that she did n’t know but she should have to get a new place, Tommy was so naughty.”

“Hannah should not let you hear such things.”

“Why, she could n’t help it. She did n’t know what she was going to say till she said it, did she? She could n’t put her hands over my ears, could she? I tell you, I’d just kick some if she tried to do that.”

The sound of a clock striking within warns Mrs. Marmaduke that if letters are to be written for the noon mail it is necessary that they shall be attended to at once. She closes the reading-book with an attempt to look stern, which only results in her looking troubled, — an aspect which does not in the least affect Master Harold.

“Harold,” she says, “I must go now and write my letters, but I cannot have anything like this to-morrow. You must have a better lesson to-morrow, and I shall be obliged to keep you in from play if you do not read well.”

“Mamma, I just hate reading, and I never want to know how.”

“But suppose that you were on a desert island, with nothing to eat, and there was a sign that told

where provisions were hid, and you could not read it. Then you would starve because you did not learn to read."

"What are provisions?"

"Things to eat."

"But there would n't be a sign on a desert island."

"There might be. People might have been there before and left it."

"Why do they call Swiss Family Robinson's Island a desert island? There was n't sand there; and a desert is where there is sand, and nothing grows but palms and sand and Arabs and camels."

"They call any island a desert island when nobody lives there."

"But that is n't right."

"It is right if that is the way in which the word is used."

"No, it is n't."

Mrs. Marmaduke sighs with the air of one who abandons an impossible discussion, and rises. As she turns to go into the house she looks back to say, —

"Remember that to-morrow we are really to read."

"Yes, mamma. Did n't I read good to-day?"

To this question she makes no answer, but goes to her desk to write to her husband, who is still in town, to see if he cannot find a governess to bring with him when he comes.

Tale the Tenth.



ONE MORNING IN SPRING.



ONE MORNING IN SPRING.

HE sunlight lay over the hills, the fields, and the orchards. The hills were purple with the richly colored buds of the shrubs and the trees not yet fully in leaf; the fields were green with the springing grass; while the trees in the orchards showed the tender green of little leaflets and the sheaths of coming blossoms. The swallows had come, and the air was full of their twittering cries, as they flashed to and fro in beautiful, smooth flight. The sky overhead was tenderly blue, flecked with clouds as soft as silk. The air was full of that delicious chill spring feeling which makes one remember at once the winter that is just past and the summer that is at hand.

Two old women stood beside a gate and talked, leaning their arms upon the palings, and seeming hardly able to stand there without such support. Yet they had stood there for more than an hour, talking, in a low, whin-

ing monotone, of the issues of fate and life and death, like two of the Fates gossiping together in the interval after the days of the earth had been completed.

One was a small woman, thin and delicate as a shadow, and looking as if the first breath would blow her away. She had looked thus delicate for sixty-five years, and in her girlhood the neighbors had said,—

“Don’t seem possible Sam Pettigrew’s folks ’ll ever be able to raise that girl.”

Now they said instead,—

“Oh, Aunty Marthy, she ’ll outlive the hull fam’ly f’ all she looks so delicate.”

Aunt Marthy was not without a certain pride in the difference between her appearance and her persistence of vitality. She smiled when she said that she was failing, with a meaning look which explained that the remark was to be taken as a joke, and that she really did expect to keep her frail hold upon existence for many a year longer. She tossed her head at the buxomness of the young girls of the village, remarking that she had seen how that sort of thing wore; so that any girl who looked more than usually strong felt that under the eye of Aunt Marthy she was as it were marked out for speedy destruction.

The other woman was of a more generous mould. She had an opulence of chins and a bosom capacious enough to have served for half the neighborhood had there been any means of insuring its proper division. She was good-humored in her appearance and inclined toward the slatternly in her attire.

"No, Marthy," she said impressively; "I tell you I just hain't slept a wink all night. There's Lucindy been cryin' from the time he went off last evening, and she won't let me come into her room. She favors her father's folks, Lucindy does. Always did. Now it ain't my way to shut out my own flesh and blood when I'm in trouble; but Lucindy, she's different, she is."

The small figure of Aunt Marthy seemed actually to quiver with suppressed eagerness.

"What did he say?" she asked with the air of one not only anxious but actually greedy for the answer.

"What was there for him to say?" demanded Mrs. Tapstone, with as much indignation as her good-natured face was capable of expressing. "When a man's done what he's done, there ain't a great sight that there's left for him to say, 'cording to my way o' looking at things."

"That's so," the other assented; "but

you said he's there more 'n an hour talking to Lucindy; so I thought he must ha' said something."

The numerous double chins of Mrs. Tapstone wavered with excitement,

"Oh, he said a sight," she responded.
"He had all sorts of excuses."

"Yes?" Aunt Marthy said, bending forward hungrily. "What kind of excuses?"

The chances for really exciting gossip in the village were not too abundant, and the old soul did not mean to be cheated out of this one if it were possible to help it.

"Oh, I did n't hear all that he said. I got kind o' tired o' staying there in the entry, and I went off a spell."

It was perfectly evident that this remark was merely a bid for more urging, and as such it was received.

"But you must have heard enough to see what he was driving at," Aunt Marthy said; adding with delicate flattery, "and then you always was so clever at putting two and two together."

"Yes," the other said, "I do think I can see as fur thro' a mill-stone with a hole in it as most folks."

"But what did you hear him say?" persisted Aunt Marthy in shameless curiosity.

"Oh, he said it warn't his fault — "

"Of course, of course," commented the hearer.

"He 'lowed he done wrong; but he said that shameless Peters girl come out to the camp to see him, an' — "

She dropped her voice and concluded her sentence in a whisper which the other leaned eagerly over the gate to hear.

Aunt Marthy shook her head grimly.

"Jest's likely's not that's true," she said.

"That Peters girl'd be capable o' anything."

"And he begged and pleaded Lucindy to forgive him and not to let him go to rack and ruin," pursued Mrs. Tapstone. "He was awful pathetic."

"Men always is when they gets caught in their evil doings," remarked Aunt Marthy with measureless cynicism.

"He said he'd never give her no more cause to complain, and that he'd never loved no girl but her."

The two were silent a moment. Either the thought of the enormous questions involved in the discussion, the weight of the tragedy which lay behind this gossip, impressed them; or the inadequacy of words to do justice to the situation may have quelled them. It is possible, on the other hand, that they merely

paused to gloat over the spicy morsels of information that they were sharing.

"I should n't ha' thought," Aunt Marthy observed, "that he'd ha' had the face to tell Lucindy all about the carryin's on o' that Peters girl."

"He did n't," was the answer. "He said it wa'n't fit for a decent girl to hear."

Disappointment was plainly visible in the face of Aunt Marthy.

"Oh, he did, did he?" she retorted. "He was giving himself away the worst kind to say that."

The mother of Lucindy was evidently suddenly aroused to the consciousness that it behooved her to put in a word in behalf of her daughter's lover.

"I d' know about that," she responded. "I d'n' know what you expect o' him. He could n't leave his own logging-camp, could he, and go off and sleep in the woods like a bear? If he ain't a Joseph, I d'n't know as he's the only one that ain't."

The tartness of her usually placid voice, and the remembrance of certain episodes in the history of the men of her own family made Aunt Marthy change her position uneasily.

"Oh, I ain't a-judgin' him," she said. "But

what do you s'pose 'll be the come out of it all? 'Ll Lucindy make it up with him?"

"She would n't last night," Mrs. Tapstone replied, with a note of despair in her voice. "It does seem 's if that everlasting Cy Peters might have held his tongue, and not told o' this just to make trouble for Lucindy and Dan. There 's some folks is always so malicious."

"Yes, that 's so," assented Aunt Marthy.

The two gossips stood a moment in the sunshine reflecting upon the wickedness of mankind in general and of Cy Peters in particular, and then with remarks about the waiting housework they moved apart. Mrs. Tapstone returned to the house, while Aunt Marthy went on her way to repeat to other gossips the information she had elicited from her friend.

Meanwhile within the house Lucinda had so far recovered from the anguish of her soul as to be able to watch through the closed shutters of her chamber while her mother stood at the gate. When the latter came back toward the house, Lucinda put on a hat and descended, just in time to meet her mother in the entry.

"For the land sakes!" cried Mrs. Tapstone, suddenly confronted with her daughter.

Her eyes had not yet adjusted themselves to the dusk of indoors, and she had almost stumbled against her daughter before she perceived her. Lucinda stood before her pale and dishevelled, the marks of weeping on her cheeks, and a light of resentment in her looks which her mother knew only too well.

"Well," she said spitefully. "I hope you have told that old tattling, gossiping old maid everything that there was to tell. It would be a pity if she should have to make up anything."

"Sho, Lucindy," her mother returned soothingly. "I ain't told Aunt Marthy nothing; and if I had, she would n't tell."

"Would n't tell!" Lucinda retorted with scorn. "Did she ever know anything that she did n't tell, 'cept her own age?"

The mother wisely allowed this question to go unanswered, and turned her attention to the task of changing the subject.

"What you got yer bunnit on for, Lucindy? You ain't a-goin' out, be you? You look all beat out. Come into the kitchen and have some breakfast. I've kep' it all hot for you."

The girl turned wearily away, and went toward the door.

"I don't want any breakfast," she said with

more gentleness. "I didn't mean to be cross, mother, but I ain't feeling well. It was good of you to keep things hot, but I could n't eat anything. It would stick in my throat."

The mother looked at her with her lips working.

"But where be you going, Lucindy?"

The girl considered a moment. Then she turned back and faced her mother with a gesture of genuine sorrow.

"I'm going over to Davis's Hollow," she said with a note of defiance in her voice.

"Davis's Hollow!" the other woman echoed with amazement.

"Yes," the girl answered.

She was paler than ever, and she leaned against the wall of the small entry as if her strength had failed her. There was in her voice a note of dogged determination which did not escape her mother's ear.

"Not to that — that Peters girl?"

"Yes, to that Peters girl."

Mrs. Tapstone looked at the desperate face of the girl with a pinched expression about her lips. Twice she tried to speak, but her voice failed her, and she could find no word in which to put the thoughts which swayed her.

"Why, Lucindy," she said at last, after

what seemed to them both a long interval of silence. "I would n't, now."

"There ain't nothin' else to do," Lucinda said doggedly.

"But what are you going to say to her?"

A hot blush came over the girl's face.

"I'm going to find out the truth," she said.

Then, as if she did not dare to trust herself to further speech lest her resolution should fail her entirely, she turned away and went into the yellow spring sunshine.

The road along which Lucinda took her way wound in and out among groups of scraggy poplar-trees which screened her somewhat from the keen-eyed observation that she felt with morbid self-consciousness would be bestowed upon her just now by the gossips of the village. As she went, her anger swelled against the tattling old crones who were probably at this very moment shaking their heads over her affairs and condemning Dan Wright. For the first time since this miserable business had come to her ears, she found herself involuntarily defending Dan to herself. It was natural that her New England nature, trained to look upon sin of the sort of which he had been guilty as of the deepest dye, should have been moved to

its depths by the discovery that her lover had been guilty of infidelity with the "Peters girl." She had shrunk with maidenly horror from the bare thought of the fault of her lover, and it had seemed to her that all was over between them. Even when he pleaded for forgiveness and assured her of his continued love, she had still felt the physical and moral repugnance which made it impossible for her to yield to his agonized entreaties.

Now, however, by a seemingly whimsical but in reality perfectly logical reaction, she began to defend him in her mind. The thought of the village gossips had made her take sides with him instead of arraigning him at the pitiless bar of conscience. She began to feel as if he could not be so wrong as it had seemed. With the thought she involuntarily lifted her head, and looked about her with more animation than she had shown since the thunderbolt fell. As she did so she perceived that she had come farther than she realized, and that she was almost at the end of her walk. Davis's Hollow lay just before her.

It was a singular, basin-shaped depression in the hills, looking rather as if it had been dug out by the hand of man than as if it

were the work of nature. It was not more than a dozen rods in diameter, and all about it ran a fringe of the gloomy Lombardy poplars which so strangely pleased the taste of a past generation, but which seem to be utterly dying as if from a sensitiveness to the want of appreciation on the part of the present inhabitants of the land across which they throw their broken shadows. In it stood the house wherein the Peters family dragged out its disapproved existence, shut off from the rest of the village. The loneliness of the situation might in itself have seemed to mark some social separation between the inhabitants of the shabby dwelling which showed forlorn traces of having once been touched up smartly with red paint, and the neighbors of half a mile away.

The mind of Lucinda Tapstone, however, was not in a condition to be susceptible to reflections of this nature. She was considering, as she paused on the brink of the hollow, how she was to see Amanda Peters without running the gauntlet of the whole family, and what she should say to her after she had found her. Suddenly, as if her thought had conjured the image of the "Peters girl" from nothingness, Amanda came out of the house and advanced toward the place where Lucinda

stood. Miss Tapstone stared at her with a fascinated look as she came on, not capable of turning to run away as she wished to do, yet becoming more and more confused as the other came nearer and nearer.

She had never seen the Peters girl so closely before; and when at length they stood face to face, she could not but be struck by the wild and evil beauty of the other. There were those who affirmed that there was gypsy blood in the veins of the mother of the family, and in the daughter the strange, barbaric beauty of the mother seemed to have an added wildness. She had black hair, which without curling hung in wilful elfish locks which were crisp and wrinkled. Her eyes were large and piercing, her lips full and red. Her skin had a deep swarthy hue, beside which the cheek of Lucinda looked pale and wan; while the blood which flushed beneath it was evidently rich and hot. Her dress was neglected and in places torn; yet it had here and there traces of a certain instinct for decoration which was quite as artistic as it was feminine, and which would in itself have been sufficient to show that there was some strain beside the ordinary blood of New England in her veins.

As she climbed the hill, she walked slowly,

and it was evident to the most careless eye that she was soon to become a mother. She pulled more closely at the throat her loosely fitting gown, and drew her fingers through the hair which straggled uncovered down her neck; but she gave no sign of being conscious of Lucinda's presence until she had come close to her.

"I seen you coming," she remarked, in a voice quite devoid of any particular expression; "and I thought likely you'd rather talk to me alone than in the house with all the young ones round."

The effect of this address upon Lucinda was like that of a dash of cold water thrown in her face. It startled and confused her, but at the same time it brought forcibly home to her the need of retaining her self-possession.

"Yes," she said mechanically, and without knowing what to add.

Amanda looked at her with piercing eyes.

"Humph!" she said. "You hain't slept none. He did n't, neither."

At this familiar mention of her lover the red blood flew into Lucinda's face. She felt as if a deliberate insult had been offered her.

"You're take it hard," Amanda went on with unexpected coolness. "He said you did."

"Has — has — he been here?" faltered

Lucinda, catching her breath at this new proof of her lover's treachery.

"He hain't been gone more 'n a minute," the other replied.

Without a word Lucinda turned where she stood and began to walk away; but she moved like one suddenly struck blind, putting out her hands as if to feel for support.

"Stop!" the other woman said authoritatively. "You need n't go off that way. He warn't here from no love for me."

A sudden note of bitterness came into her voice as she added,—

"If there is any one woman in the world that Dan Wright hates worse than he does the devil, I'm the one,—if he don't believe that I am the devil, that is."

There was a desperate ring to her voice which bore convincing testimony to the truth of what she said, and which arrested Lucinda's steps more than the words themselves. A certain jaunty defiance, a brutal indifference to whatever befell sounded in these hard accents, and told eloquently how deep was the wound made by the hostility of the man with whom fate had tangled her thread of life.

"But—" began Lucinda confusedly.

The other laughed boisterously.

"Oh, you pale thing!" she cried out. "You mealy-mouthed chit! You don't even dare to ask the questions you came to get answers to. I told him I hated you, but I'll be blamed if there is enough of you to hate."

She seized Lucinda's wrist as she spoke, and squeezed it so tightly that Lucinda cried out in agony; whereat the Peters girl burst into a peal of wild laughter.

"Did it hurt?" she cried. "That's nothing to what I could do if I wanted to. Oh, I'm strong enough."

She threw out her arms with a sudden wild gesture as if appealing to the wide heaven above them, and a quick spasm of anguish distorted her handsome, evil face.

"Why could n't he have loved me," she cried out, "instead of this stupid little fool? I was a mate for him."

Lucinda shrunk away, cowering together as if from a mad woman.

"Oh, you need n't be afraid," the other said, lapsing again into her half-sneering manner. "I ain't a-going to hurt you. I told him I would n't."

A sudden rush of outraged dignity came to the aid of Lucinda.

"I am not afraid of you," she said, lifting

her head. "There was no need of his coming to you on my account."

Once more she turned away; but the other caught her by the wrist.

"Hold on," she said. "I have n't done yet. I told him I'd tell you the truth about that night."

"I—I don't want to hear," faltered Lucinda, who had come for no other purpose, but who now would have given anything to escape.

"But you 've got to," Amanda responded. "He came over this morning and made me promise. He could make me promise anything. I'd go to h— for him if he wanted me to!"

The fierceness of her tone and manner was not reassuring, but Lucinda held her own now. Her moral courage was overcoming her physical weakness, and she did not cower as at first under the burning eyes of the woman before her.

"Say it then," she said, "and let me go home."

"That night," Amanda said, her voice taking on a curious note which was half defiance and half tenderness, "I knew he was alone in the camp. I heard Sam Thomson tell Billy Acres so; and I made up my mind that

that was my chance. I've loved Dan Wright ever since he was in tyers. He hain't never cared the turn of his finger for me, and he never pretended to. It ain't pretty for a woman to be in love with a man that ain't even shyin' up to her, but I'm different from the common run of girls. I don't care who knows that I've been in love with Dan all my life."

A shudder went through Lucinda. She felt too faint to stand, and moving aside a step she leaned against the trunk of the forlorn and broken-topped Lombardy poplars. Amanda laughed savagely.

"I started about as soon as dark, and I walked all the way up to the camp, except for two or three miles that I got a lift on a load of wood that some up-country man was hauling home and got belated with. It was about the middle of the night when I got there, and Dan was so sound asleep that I thought I should never get him waked up to let me in."

Lucinda put out her hand with a shuddering gesture.

"Stop!" she said. "I don't want to hear! I can't hear!"

Amanda laughed boisterously.

"Oh, you're too nice to hear, are you?"

Well, it ain't no matter. It warn't his fault. He told me that night that he despised me for coming, and he cursed me into the bargain. That was the reward I got for— ”

“ Stop ! ” Lucinda cried again. “ I won't hear you ! You were a devil to go there ! ”

The other came close to her, and caught her once more by the wrist in a grip so strong that it left its mark for many a day.

“ You poor fool ! ” she cried savagely. “ What do I care for that ? I love him, you pale-livered kitten ! Do you think I cared what happened afterward ? I love him, I tell you ! Oh, I should like to pull you into inch bits, and throw you to the dogs in the yard down there ! You think you care for him ! ”

And again her laughter rang out like that of a demoniac.

“ Here, Rover ! ” she called suddenly. “ Here, Prince ! Here, Watch ! ”

The mongrel dogs which always surrounded the Peters mansion came bounding up out of the hollow at her call, their tongues hanging out of their mouths.

“ At her, boys ! ” Amanda cried; then just as they sprang toward Lucinda, who was in mortal terror, she caught them by their

collars and flung them backward. "Down, Prince! Down, Rover, down! Down, I say! Home with you, home!"

The dogs slouched away, turning to look at her in doubt what this sudden change of instruction might mean.

"Go!" their wild mistress again commanded; and they went back to the tumble-down house in Davis's Hollow.

Lucinda caught her breath, leaning against the tree-trunk.

"You had better go home," Amanda said. "I shall kill you if you stay here. You know all you want to. I did n't tell it for love of you. He's in love with you fast enough. You need n't be afraid of me. He would n't touch me with a ten-foot pole."

Lucinda had no word to say, but she needed no second bidding to speed her departure. She trembled in every limb; but she hastened along the road by which she had come, intent only upon getting as far as possible from that dreadful woman and her frightful dogs. But before she had gone ten paces Amanda ran after her and laid a strong, detaining hand on her shoulder. Sick with fear, Lucinda turned her face over her shoulder to her pursuer. Her eyes met those of Amanda fairly ablaze with triumphant hate

and malice. There was something fiendish in the intensity with which she hissed into the ears of Lucinda the words which were her parting arrow, poisoned and sure to leave a festering wound. She bent down over the shrinking girl with glittering gaze, and stabbed her with the frightful truth.

“I shall have his child!” she said.

THE END.



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